

SIMONE

A Novel by
LION FEUCHTWANGER

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THE REFUGEES

ONLY a few more steps, then the narrow path made a sudden turn and revealed the highway. Simone, with heart beating in her throat expectantly took these few steps. Yesterday she had first caught sight of the procession of refugees on the arterial highway. By to-day it would perhaps have reached the narrow side road.

For three weeks there had been talk of the refugees. In the beginning there were only the Dutch and Belgians, but now the people from the north of France were also fleeing southward before the advancing enemy; more and more came, and for the past week the whole of Burgundy was flooded. Yesterday, as Simone cycled to town to do her daily household shopping, she could hardly pass through the crowds, and to-day she had even left her bicycle at home.

When Simone Planchard, with her lively imagination, first heard about refugees, she pictured them as hurrying and frightened people, always hurrying and always frightened. What she had seen in these last few days was simpler but more terrible; it haunted and tormented her; there was no sleep for her at night. Every time she went to the city she feared this pitiful spectacle, but every day she longed to see it with a sorrowful and turbulent eagerness.

Now she reached the bend, and could see a stretch of the road. It was a narrow, neglected road, almost always wild and lonely, leading nowhere, except to the mountain village, Noiret, with its six houses. But to-day it was not feared—there were people. The huge stream scattered its drops even to this point.

Simone stood still and looked round. A tall, lanky first-year-old, she had on the simple light green striped

which she always wore for shopping; a large, closed wicker basket was pressed against her body; her slender arms and naked legs protruded from the dress. Her bony, tanned face framed with ash blonde hair was tense; her dark eyes, deep-set under a low but broad and well-shaped forehead, eagerly absorbed all that moved before her in the dusty road. It was the familiar sight: people and vehicles dragging along hopelessly, carriages recklessly piled high with household goods, mattresses on top of motor cars as protection against machine-gunning from low-flying enemy planes, exhausted human beings and animals crawling along without a goal.

There stood Simone Planchard at the bend of the road, her narrow, well-formed lips tightly pressed together, gazing. It would be wrong to call her beautiful, but her intelligent, thoughtful, somewhat stubborn face with its strong chin and its prominent Burgundian nose was good to look at. For a full minute, and for yet another, she stood in the dust and heat of the early afternoon, gazing at the fugitives.

At last she tore herself away. She had much to do; Madame had given her many errands. To be sure, the Villa Monrepos, the home of the Planchard family, was well stocked, but it seemed certain that in another two or three days it would be impossible to make further purchases. And so the list that Simone had received from Madame was lengthy, and it would not be easy to do all her errands in the midst of the general excitement and confusion. She did not linger over the scene but walked quickly and directly towards the city.

Soon she had reached the lowest point of the narrow side road where it turned into Route 6, which led in a semicircle round the hilly centre of Saint-Martin. The sight that greeted her here was more pitiful than any she had seen in the past days. Across the street stood motor cars that had tried to turn off; other cars had wedged them in; the whole endless procession of horse-drawn and motor vehicles, bicycles, donkeys, pedestrians, stood in a hopeless jumble. No one even cursed, no one made an effort to disentangle the throng. Resigned, in awkward discomfort, they all squatted in the

sultry heat where they had stopped, old and young, men and women, soldiers and civilians, wounded and whole, in sweating, hopeless stupor.

With open, earnest eyes that made her face older than her years, Simone stared at the dust-covered, stationary procession which stood before her strangely silent, like a picture. But she had become quite sensible in the course of her fifteen years; she thought of her errands and, concealing her emotions, sought only to cross the thronged street. The big basket firmly pressed to her side, she climbed over dented fenders, over the rear end of a cart, politely asking pardon of the occupants who scarcely noticed her as they dozed in the heat.

Finally she had crossed the street and mounted the old, crumbling, stepping-stone path that a stranger would scarcely find. It led steeply up the mountain in capricious serpentine, revealing ever-changing vistas of the ruined fortifications that surrounded the ancient city. At every turn new perspectives of the valley of the winding Cerein river came into view. The landscape was gay and attractive; the wide, bright valley was covered with vineyards, olive and chestnut groves. Every hill-top bore an ancient settlement and in the east towered the forest-covered mountains. In better times countless strangers had come to enjoy this view, and Simone, no matter how well she knew this landscape, had always absorbed it with appreciative, understanding eyes. But to-day she had no feeling for it. To-day she only strove to forget what she had seen in the highway, and she was glad that the difficult path claimed her full attention. At some places she actually had to climb, and that was hard because of the big basket. Next time when she came to town she would wear slacks. Some people, to be sure, thought it improper for girls to wear slacks in war-time; Madame herself disapproved.

Now Simone had reached the top, and she entered the city through the Porte Saint-Lazare. She crossed the square in front of the church. At other times this little place lay

empty and peaceful ; quiet old people sat on the benches under the elms. Now and then tourists stood there and looked at the famous statue over the church portal.

To-day the square was crowded. Many of the refugees had come up. But they had no eyes for the saint ; they were looking for petrol or food or other essentials. They exchanged experiences which they had had here or on the road. They were bitter experiences. Almost everyone lacked everything, and nothing was to be had here in Saint-Martin. Almost all of them had had narrow escapes from death. There they stood or sat, and the townspeople, including Simone, stood round them and listened to their tales.

German aeroplanes had shot at the slow-moving fugitive processions ; the refugees had been constantly exposed to their attacks ; at the jammed cross-roads, at the bridges, at closed railroad crossings there had been no cover. "We regret that we fled," most of them grimly reported. "It is dreadful to sit inactively at home and wait for the bombs and the Germans, but to be on the road is ten times worse. Everything about this flight is ghastly."

Simone listened, but she had heard it all before. She went on, past the Hall of Justice, a beautiful old building. Through the door she looked into the hall. Straw had been spread and lay many refugees there, closely crowded, pitiful. Simone turned her eyes away ; with a vague feeling of guilt she walked towards the Rue de Sauvigny, keeping close to the houses along the way.

The Rue de Sauvigny, a narrow, winding street with fine old houses, was the main business street of the old part of the town. Refugees wandered from shop to shop but found only signs : "No bread," "No meat," "No petrol," "No tobacco." Most shops were closed and where the shutters over the show windows were not down, one could see an incongruous advertising sign or some useless object, perhaps an intricate piece of pottery intended as a salt shaker, or a large storm lantern for which no candles were available. In

the window of M. Armand's barber shop, sneering and lonely, stood a huge empty perfume bottle.

If the shops were closed, however, Simone knew the back entrance and she also knew the signals to which the shopkeepers reacted. If to no one else, they were at home to Madame Planchard and to Simone, her messenger; there was always something left for the Planchard family.

Simone collected whatever might be useful additions to the hoarded supplies of the Villa Monrepos, in anticipation of weeks of drought. Here was the shop, "L'Agréable et l'Utile." It was quite empty. Even Monsieur Carpentier, known as Monsieur L'Utile, had left; only Monsieur Lafleche, known as Monsieur L'Agréable, was present. For Simone he still had a hose and garden sprinkler. And in Monsieur Armand's closed barber shop there was still some shaving soap for Monsieur Planchard. Simone even succeeded in getting into the only department store in the town, the well-barricaded Galeries Bourignonnes. Only three employees remained in the big store, but Mademoiselle Joséphine, the head of the millinery department, had some ribbons and materials that had been laid aside for Madame Planchard. While she delivered the wares to Simone she whispered to her excitedly that Monsieur Amiot, the owner of the Galeries Bourignonnes, had also left the city. She named others who had fled: there was Monsieur Raimu, the grocer, Monsieur Laroche of the Crédit Lyonnais, and many other business men, lawyers, and doctors.

Simone had completed only the smaller part of her errands when she left the ancient inner city, passed through the Porté de l'Horloge, and began to make the rounds of the shops in the new section, mostly along the Avenue de la Gare.

Her way led across the Place du Général Gramont, the largest square in town. The annual fair took place here, and on July the fourteenth it was illuminated with flares and coloured lights for a public dance. To-day there were more cars and wagons parked than for any fair; many refugees had obviously given up hope of further progress and were

prepared to spend the coming days and nights here in the vehicles. General Gramont's monument was scarcely visible amidst the cars. Someone had stretched ropes from the General's head and extended arm to some of the motorcars and had hung bits of washing on them to dry.

It was a wild confusing scene. There were two ambulances which had somehow found their way here. Simone looked through the open door of one, but quickly turned away; the head which she saw there amid rags and bandages was no longer a human head. The Medical Corps men sat dozing on the running board. There stood a heavily loaded farm wagon, with horse still harnessed to it. On the driver's seat sat a pregnant woman; perched dangerously on top of the load crouched an unspeakably dirty little child, weeping, held in its arms. Soldiers sat or lay between the vehicles; many had replaced parts of their uniforms with civilian clothes, overcoats, hats, scarves; many had taken off the shoes, exposing their bloody feet, injured by long marches. There were push-carts and perambulators loaded with strange objects. Simone noticed one at which a girl was absent-mindedly but diligently scratching away the crusted mud with which it was covered; wherever the dirt fell away, a violent black lacquer appeared. Very many of the fugitives looked sick and miserable; all were ragged and obviously in need of the simplest essentials. The clothes which now hung in rags and tatters on them were quite obviously not the most suitable they were Sunday clothes. And the objects which had been brought along were generally not of practical value but often quite casual things which at the moment of departure had seemed particularly desirable—a dignified brocade arm-chair or an oversized gramophone.

In her light green striped dress, the big basket on her arm Simone stood and stared at the ghastly throng of cars and people. The uncanny spectacle fascinated her. In her clean neat dress, well fed and well housed, she felt a gap between herself and these people, but at the same time she suffered

all the more from that feeling of guilt which had come over her earlier.

Slowly she went her way down the Avenue de la Gare. But here in the new section of the town all the shops were closed and into many of them not even Simone could get admission. Evidently the owners had fled. Nevertheless the contents of her basket grew, although some things, especially foodstuffs, were still missing from her list. As a last resort she decided to return to the Hotel de la Poste in the old town. The hotel would still be well supplied and she would be able to get something, for the Planchard family had business connections there and the hotel was under obligations to the Planchards.

The papier-maché cook that used to stand invitingly before the door of the famous Restaurant de la Poste had been knocked over and lay awkwardly on the pavement, and Monsieur Berthier, the owner of the hotel, was arguing with some refugees who wanted food or lodging. The Hotel de la Poste had a great reputation. On the way back from Elba Napoleon had stopped here, and the room in which the Emperor had slept was still maintained in the same state. Monsieur Berthier was a direct descendant of the Berthier who had then owned the hotel, and he sometimes let the imperial room to strangers whom he particularly liked or who had plenty of money. Monsieur Berthier was a man of great dignity, president of the Hotelkeepers' Association of Burgundy, and used to dealing with people. But now he was out of his depth; he was perspiring, excited, desperate. Yet still more desperate were the others who could not believe that there was nothing to be had and continued to ask if there were no chance.

Simone squeezed past the excited group and went round the building to the other entrance. It lay in the Rue Malherbe behind the little walled garden of the hotel. It was an inconspicuous gate and, of course, locked. But Simone knew what to do; she picked up a stone and knocked sharply several times at short intervals.

Two people were sitting on the garden wall, one a boy of perhaps fourteen, the other a middle-aged man. Both were watching her, the man absently, but the boy attentively. Simone knew that a window would soon open in the caretaker's house, someone would look out furtively and nod his head, and the boy, with his bright eyes, would see it. And that is what happened. The boy saw the window, looked from the window to Simone, saw the basket and saw the door opening. Simone did not want to look at the boy, but as she passed through the gate she could not resist turning her head towards him. She saw that the boy's bright, knowing eyes were still directed towards her, and she swallowed hard.

In the hotel kitchen Simone found that she could actually get some of the items on her list. They gave her a jar of their special meat paste, a piece of wonderful smoked ham, and many other things. Her basket was full and Simone had to carry a piece of Roblechon cheese, wrapped in paper, in her hand. She stepped out of the garden gate, the heavy basket on her arm and the little package in her hand. The two refugees were still sitting on the wall, watching her attentively. Suddenly, with a timid motion, Simone put the package of Roblechon cheese into the boy's hand. He looked at her angrily and did not thank her; she went on hastily, as though she had done wrong.

It seemed to her as if the two were looking after her with hostile eyes until she turned the corner. She was a little frightened. If the fugitives knew what was in her basket they would take it away from her. She was afraid, but at the same time she felt that she could scarcely blame them, and almost wished someone would take the basket from her.

Simone had grown up in comfortable circumstances in the Villa Monrepos. Since the death of her father ten years before she had lived there as a poor relation, on sufferance. She took the place of a maid and worked hard but, on the other hand, she ate with the family, and her guardian, Uncle Prosper, insisted that she should be treated as one of the family. She accepted both duties and privileges as natural,

and the customs and conditions of the Villa Monrepos were as incontrovertible for her as the alternation of day and night. Without open or inner resistance she obeyed all the instructions of Madame, Uncle Prosper's mother. It was self-evident that in these times a prudent housewife should look ahead and fill her larders with provisions. Nevertheless, without consciously giving way to the thought, Simone felt that the sense of guilt which had oppressed her for days was connected with the heavy basket she carried.

She would have liked a good, heart-to-heart talk with someone about all her experiences of recent days. Only a short time ago, only last week, they had lived in the perfect security of the Maginot Line, under the protection of a strong army. In spite of the war, calm and order had reigned everywhere, and daily life had gone on in normal abundance. And suddenly, overnight, in spite of the Maginot Line and the army, the enemy was in the heart of the country and all France was a mob of pitiful refugees half-crazed with misery. She was sick with pity and worry. She was depressed because everyone had lived stupidly and leisurely throughout this year of war. She was confused because she could not understand how all this was connected. She would have to talk about it to someone and ask questions of someone who was wiser than she; but she knew no one to whom she could open her heart.

Uncle Prosper, her father's stepbrother, was very fond of her. She was really grateful that he had taken her into his home. He was kind, generous, a good Frenchman, a great patriot. But he continued to devote himself to his transport business as though it were still of major importance, and although the recent terrible events affected him, it seemed to Simone that they did not agitate him as much as they did her. At any rate what he said about these developments was not what Simone wanted to know; it explained nothing, it did not dispel her perplexity.

Madame, uncle's mother, remained entirely aloof from current happenings. She erected a firm barrier about herself

and her house, and examined everything from the angle of its possible beneficial or harmful effect on the Villa Monrepos. If, for example, a fugitive had, in fact, taken away Simone's basket, Madame would have regarded him as a robber and criminal, and any attempt on Simone's part to excuse him would have seemed to Madame impudent and rebellious. Even Uncle Prosper, in spite of his good heart, would have had no sympathy with any such excuse.

Of course, Simone would not mention the fact that she had given the Roblechon cheese to the refugee boy, after all the trouble of procuring it. Her relations in the Villa Monrepos would regard her as mad; and then the boy had only given her an angry stare. Yet she would have done the same thing again.

Her head full of ideas, absent-mindedly, yet with vigorous strides of her long legs, she walked through the winding, hilly streets. Her errands were done. Now she had to go to her place of business, Uncle Prosper's garage and transport office, for her turn of duty at the petrol pump. Her way took her past Etienne's house. If only he were here! But he was away at Chatillon, working in a machine shop.

Simone and Etienne were good friends; he was devoted to her and looked up to her. But after all, he was only a young boy and she felt older than he, although in fact she was a year younger. She could discuss all her thoughts and feelings with him freely, but she was certain that he could never explain the confusing events of the times. Still, she wished he were here for he was Henriette's brother.

Her school friend Henriette was the only person with whom she had been really intimate, and since Henriette had died a year before there was no one now in whom she could confide completely. As Simone with her heavy basket passed the house where Etienne and Henriette had lived she felt very much alone.

If she could have spoken to Henriette about the refugees, everything would have become simpler. They would perhaps have quarrelled, Henriette might have got angry, but they

would have understood each other. Henriette had been the exact opposite of Simone, quick, moody, always doing the unexpected. She had been quarrelsome and had enjoyed hurting people. She and Simone had once had a fight at school; that was when Henriette had made a disparaging remark about Simone's father. Then the otherwise quiet Simone had attacked her and had violently beaten and scratched the smaller, weaker girl. And after that, curiously enough, Henriette had asked her forgiveness and they had become friends.

Although Simone passed her house frequently, she had not thought of Henriette for many days. That often happened. For days, for weeks, she did not think of Henriette and then she reproached herself for her lack of loyalty. Even now, while she ardently longed for a talk with Henriette, she could not remember her friend's appearance. The gentle, waxlike face of the dead girl in her coffin had engraved itself deeply upon Simone's memory and she could recall it at all times; but it was hard to remember the living girl with her mobile, delicate, pale features. In Simone's memory this face constantly changed; sometimes it was sneering and comforting, sometimes it inspired hatred and yet the greatest confidence. If only she could have a talk with Henriette.

Her father was the person whom she really needed. Although Pierre Planchard had been dead for ten years he was more alive to her than was Henriette. Simone was only five when he died. Rumours concerning the manner of his death never ceased to circulate. Pierre Planchard had perished in the Congo on an expedition which he undertook to study the working conditions of the natives. He had always been an impassioned champion of the oppressed. His friends declared that he was preparing a book presenting first-hand evidence of the ruthless exploitation of the negroes, and that the colonists had done away with him in the jungle. Pierre Planchard's manuscript had never been found and the official investigation had revealed nothing. Old Madame Planchard, Uncle Prosper's mother, said that he was dead

and gone, but for his friends Pierre Planchard remained a hero and a martyr.

Simone's recollections of her father obviously could not be very clear, for she was not quite five when she had last seen him. Still, she believed that she remembered him well. She even declared that his voice still sounded in her ear, a resonant, deep and very youthful voice. She particularly recalled the time when her father took her up into the steeple of Notre Dame. They were in a fair-sized company. Of course she could not climb the three hundred and seventy-six steps. The others laughed and advised her father to take her down, but he, in spite of their amused protests, carried her all the way up and showed her the evil, grotesque rain spouts, the gargoyles and carvings, and he calmed her fears of all this strangeness, until she felt only curiosity.

On the whole, Simone's memory was dependent upon pictures of her father, photographs, faded newspaper clippings. He had a lean face, large, deep eyes and bushy hair. Simone had been told that these eyes were blue-grey, that they could be very angry and very cheerful, and that the hair was reddish-blond. The pictures made Pierre Planchard appear older than he was, but whenever Simone recalled the incident of Notre Dame she remembered her father as a very young man with a hearty laugh, and the many little wrinkles about his eyes did not make him older. Whenever she invoked her memory of him she saw him as clearly as though he stood before her.

The people of the Villa Monrepos did not like to speak of Pierre Planchard. Uncle Prosper, to be sure, loved and admired his stepbrother in spite of their divergent views, but Madame spoke of her stepson Pierre with icy disdain and never let Simone forget that he had left her without a penny. And Uncle Prosper never objected. But Madame's arrogant remarks only made Simone doubly proud of her father.

He ought to be here now. He would understand why her basket seemed so heavy to-day and why she had given the Roblechon to the fugitive boy.

She had now reached the Palais Noiret, a fine, old building in which Monsieur le Sous-Préfet had his offices. She was well-known in the Deputy Prefecture and she left her basket with the concierge so as not to carry it all the way to her uncle's office.

Rid of the basket and with light feet she walked towards the Avenue du Parc that led out of the city and to her uncle's business premises. But before she reached the avenue and the new section of the town she changed her mind. She would visit Père Bastide. She felt she simply had to discuss the things she had seen with some friendly soul.

The old bookbinder Père Bastide was not popular at the Villa Monrepos. Simone's people did not approve of her friendship with him or with his son, Monsieur Xavier, the secretary of the Deputy Prefecture. Uncle Prosper and Madame turned up their noses at the political views of the two, and they blandly called the old bookbinder an idiot. Perhaps Père Bastide was a little ridiculous, eccentric, stubborn. He became excited over everything, he was unrestrained in praise and censure, and he often confused past and present; but he believed in France, even now when so many doubted, and she loved to hear him speak of France. Most important of all, he was a friend of her father's, he had known him well, and he often spoke of him proudly and affectionately. This was why Simone clung to the old man; and after all to-day's dark and sad experiences it would do her good to see him.

Père Bastide lived at the Petite Porte. On the outermost spur of the city hill, at the highest point, hung his ancient little house that had been patched up countless times and looked down on the one side over the variformed nut-brown roofs of the old town, on the other over the wide extent of the winding Cercin River valley.

Simone climbed up the worn stairs and looked through the glass door into the workshop. Although Père Bastide had long retired, he liked to potter about and bind books for his

own amusement, and he spent most of his time in the shop. He loved books and had a large library.

In this workshop, crammed with all sorts of junk and old-fashioned furniture, Simone saw him sitting asleep in his armchair. Above his head hung a picture of the great Socialist leader, Jean Jaurès, whom Père Bastide revered. Jaurès had been assassinated before the beginning of the last war by a fanatic instigated by the extreme right-wing newspapers. For the bookbinder Jaurès was the symbol of the great past, the symbol of France. The picture showed him standing in front of a huge flag, on a platform, speaking to the masses. He stood there awkwardly, his massive, powerful torso resting on slightly bent legs; his neck was drawn down between his shoulders, and his head with the broad, short, square-cut beard was covered with a hard round hat. His hands were forming a gesture that seemed to invite the invisible multitude up to him. The man appeared colossal, patriarchal and prophetic, good-natured and yet irresistible.

For a little while Simone stood in front of the glass door looking at the old bookbinder sitting in his arm-chair dozing under the picture. He seemed changed. Formerly she had always seen him very lively, fidgety, full of fire; now he crouched there in the large arm-chair, tiny, shrivelled up, old as the hills. Simone looked at him sorrowfully and was moved by tenderness.

She supposed that he would not like to be surprised, so she went down the stairs again, noisily slammed the front door, and came upstairs once more, her step as loud as possible.

As she had expected, Père Bastide was standing up wide awake, his head high with the ruddy face and the shining white hair. "Hello, little one," he said gaily, walked to the cupboard, brought out a bottle of his home-made nut brandy, and offered her a glass. She sipped it politely.

It all happened as she thought it would. "Listen," he said and pushed her into a chair, walked backwards and forwards, and held forth excitedly about what was happening. "That's what we have come to," he said angrily and pointed

to the small window through which one saw the Cerein valley. There, far down, crawled the endless procession of the refugees over the sunny, dusty road.

"It is pure madness," he said, "that they fled; they only race from one peril into a greater one. And instead of holding them back, the authorities urged them to go. Now they block the highways and our reserves cannot advance at any point. One does not know whether our government is merely incompetent or whether there is an evil purpose behind it." The old man looked excited, he gesticulated violently; Simone could scarcely believe that only a few moments ago he had sat there, tiny and bent and aged.

"The Prime Minister," Père Bastide meanwhile continued, "has declared over the radio that entire army corps were not where they were supposed to be and that, contrary to orders, bridges had not been blown up. He has dismissed sixteen generals. He himself has hinted that there was treason. Many say, as does my son Xavier, that persons in very high places, in the Industrial Council, in the Comité des Forges, in the Banque de France, had counted on a Boche victory from the very start, and they say that such a victory would not displease them. I can't believe that," he shouted with his clear voice, in impotent rage. "My old brain won't believe that. I know what the fascists are capable of. Since they murdered Jaurès I know of what the Two Hundred Families are capable. I'll believe almost anything of them, but not that."

He suddenly stopped in front of her, pointed at the picture of Jaurès and quoted his fanatically revered master: "There is," he said, "'a historic structure called France. It developed from centuries of common suffering and common longing. To be sure, there is class war, there are sharp social contrasts, but that does not change the concept of the fatherland.' Do you believe," he asked Simone with a threatening gesture, "that there are Frenchmen who would actually betray France in her hour of danger? Who would, in a spirit of treachery, send their fellow countrymen out on

the highways like that?" He pointed down at the fugitive procession. "I don't believe it," he raged, striking the table with his fist.

Simone looked at him with her fine, earnest eyes. He was a bit of old France, and he would not admit that his France no longer existed. Small and helpless, brave and a little ludicrous, he stood there and fought for his dead ideals.

"The lawyers are to blame for it all," he went on and resumed his pacing, "the politicians and the lawyers who rule France. They looked on while the Boches rearmed and while our financiers furnished the money. They looked on while our Two Hundred Families transferred their capital to America and peddled our steel to the Boches; they debated and argued and argued and debated; and there's the result," he pointed again at the road full of refugees.

Wickedly pleased, Simone listened to Père Bastide's indictment of the lawyers. The lawyers had prevented her father's name from being cleared and from being duly respected. The lawyers had dragged out the investigation of his death in the jungles of the Congo and had finally permitted it to lapse completely.

Père Bastide stormed at the lawyers a little longer. Then, practically in the middle of a sentence, he broke off, stopped in front of her, and smiled. In the midst of his grief and anger he even succeeded in producing a friendly, if somewhat forced, smile. "But, my little one," he said, "you probably didn't come here to listen to me scold my heart out. And you haven't even drunk my nut brandy. But wait. I have something else for you." And with his stiff, artificially brisk stride, he went into the adjoining room.

Simone guessed what he would bring. She was a passionate reader and spent all her meagre spare time over books. Père Bastide knew that, advised her, and lent her books.

Now he returned with books under his arm. With skilled hands he made a parcel and tied it up. She thanked him and said good-bye. She had remained longer than she had intended.

Père Bastide again stood at the window and stared down at the distant highway with its caterpillar of refugees. "Disgraceful, disgraceful," he raged. "But," he added, consoling himself, "France has been in tighter spots, and has always got out of them. A miracle always happened."

His confidence touched Simone, but she asked herself from where the miracle would come if no one did anything except wait. Had he not himself only recently quoted a saying from the Orient: "When, if not now? And who else, if not you?"

II

THE GARAGE

HER doubts fled as she briskly descended the steep path that brought her back to the centre of the old town. It was a good thing that she had looked up Père Bastide and she felt more cheerful. France will recover.

The rock path debouched upon the Rue de l'Arquebuse, and here stood the stateliest house in the old town. It was number 97, and the number 97 was painted on it in huge old-fashioned, ornate figures. 97 Rue de l'Arquebuse. At school Simone had learned that this fine place had once belonged to the old noble family of Trémouille and later to the Montmorencys. Now a great, shiny copper sign proclaimed that the lawyer and notary Charles-Marie Levautour had his offices here. The stately house actually belonged to Maître Levautour, and Simone felt even greater resentment than usual as she passed it to-day. Maître Levautour, a contemporary and schoolmate of her father, was one of the lawyers who had prevented the clearing of Pierre Planchard's name. He had continued to feed the press campaign against Pierre Planchard with new, poisonous material, and he had prevented the community of Saint-Martin from dedicating a

tablet to Pierre Planchard's memory. Simone hated him profoundly. He was one of those against whom Père Bastide had raged. He was one of the lawyers with black robes and cap and white neck-frill who cheated the people out of their rights by trickery and who bore the guilt for the present plight of France.

Now she was back in the Avenue du Parc where the street turned off to the garage. It was late and there was still a great deal of work to be done in the garden and kitchen. She really ought to go home and omit the trip to the garage. She actually would have had a good excuse: the errands had taken longer than usual. And besides, her job at the petrol pump to-day seemed more disagreeable than ever. Moreover, she thought with disgust of the insolent glances and the impertinent remarks with which the lorry-driver Maurice would certainly greet her.

So there she stood and hesitated in the Avenue du Parc where the way home and the way to the garage divided. But then, in spite of arguments to the contrary, she went down the Avenue du Parc towards the garage. She did not want to appear cowardly. If she did not take her place at the petrol pump, the driver Maurice would think she was staying away because she was afraid of his remarks. But she was not afraid.

Although she walked briskly and the street went downhill, it took her a good fifteen minutes. The Planchard Transport Company was at the extreme west end of the new town where the main road to Saint-Martin branched off from Route 6 which made a wide curve around the city. The Company's premises were not situated directly on the highway but covered a rather large terrain with an approaching road of its own.

Uncle Prosper had protected himself against being overrun by refugees. A chain closed the driveway to his business house, and a huge sign proclaimed: "Private road, leads only to the house"; two of his workmen were on guard. At the closed gate in the wall surrounding the loading yard huge

letters stated: "No petrol, no spare parts, no repair work, no road maps."

Here again Simone entered by a private signal. She first reported in the office. After the wild disorder of the highway these rooms seemed empty and peaceful. The coloured travel posters on the walls looked strangely absurd to-day: huge lorries rolling along perilously steep roads, ocean liners pushing their mighty keels through foaming seas, picturesque roads winding over rugged mountains.

For a fleeting moment Simone was aware of the scope of the business Uncle Prosper had built up. The Planchard Company not only had a monopoly on the extensive transport business, especially in wine and lumber, of the entire Département, it not only operated several bus lines, it had also built roads into the dark, romantic mountain range to the east and had organized a flourishing tourist trade.

Simone was astonished not to find Uncle Prosper at once upon entering. No matter in what corner of the big establishment one might be, the active proprietor could be seen or heard everywhere; he seemed to be in all places at once, in the offices, in the big garage, in the loading yard, giving orders or chatting in his deep, resounding voice. Simone had expected that in this time of trouble he would be doubly busy.

Monsieur Peyroux, the bookkeeper, enlightened her. The boss had locked himself in his private office and did not wish to be disturbed. He was engaged with the Chatelain, the Marquis de Saint-Brisson. As the telephone was not working, Monsieur Peyroux whispered reverently, the Marquis had deigned to come down in person from the castle to speak to Monsieur Planchard. The rabbit face of the bookkeeper looked fatuous with deference.

Monsieur Peyroux was accustomed to speak frankly and confidentially with Mademoiselle Simone. He was attached to the firm, proud to be an employee of Monsieur Planchard whom he admired, and Mademoiselle Simone was a relative of the boss. He considered it self-evident that she would

regard it as a great honour if a gentleman like the Marquis de Saint-Brisson was dependent upon Monsieur Planchard's help. But the other employees in the office smiled and winked at Simone; they were probably cracking malicious jokes about the business deals which "that fascist," the Marquis, was proposing to her uncle in his private office.

Simone asked for the key to the petrol pump and went about her business. She crossed the yard, which was ordinarily a hive of activity: tourist cars, buses, lorries came and went, were repaired, tested, loaded, and unloaded. To-day the big yard lay empty in the bright sunlight. On the bench in the shadow of the wall sat the old driver Richard, the packer Georges, and two others. With relief Simone noted that the driver Maurice was not with them.

Simone had not an easy position here in the garage yard. Uncle Prosper treated his people jovially, kindly, even affectionately; he was broad-minded in everything that did not concern business. He was well liked. But in matters of business he was not to be trifled with, and now, using the war as pretext, he made great demands on his people. Sometimes this created considerable dissatisfaction, but they were dependent upon the boss, since it was up to him to decide among his packers and drivers he would designate as indispensable and so save him from military duty at the front. They therefore did not dare to rebel, but they thought they could release their pent-up wrath against Simone, the poor relation. They did not regard her as a fellow-worker but as a relative of the boss, they felt that they were watched and spied upon by her, and they did not like it. In her presence they particularly enjoyed airing their resentment against the boss.

For his part, Uncle Prosper liked to assign her duties that he did not wish to entrust to or require of his other employees. Her job at the petrol pump was of this nature.

The Planchard Company had hoarded great quantities of petrol to which they were not entitled under the rationing regulations. Monsieur Planchard did not disdain small profits

and sold his black-market petrol to people who were willing and in a position to pay exorbitant prices. In these last few days petrol was worth more than the finest vintage wines, and Monsieur Planchard's prices soared higher and higher. He had discovered that if he let an adult employee sell the petrol, embarrassing scenes occurred. The purchasers cursed and shouted and there was gossip in town. So Monsieur Planchard preferred to limit the sale of petrol to one afternoon hour and to put a little girl at the pump who knew nothing of business and merely carried out orders.

With a sulky, defiant look on her face Simone took her place at the pump. There she stood in her neat light green striped dress, and the red enamel of the pump gleamed in the sun.

A customer came and when she named the price he recoiled. He asked once more, pressed his lips together, hesitated, made up his mind, swallowed hard, and paid. Another came and left indignantly. A third came, swore abusively, and paid.

Simone had always detested this job, but the ten years she had spent growing up in the Villa Monrepos had filled her with the conviction that Uncle Prosper was a great, exemplary business man, and that what he did was right. If he put her at the pump, that was right. If she did her duty at the pump, that was the least she could do for a man to whom she was deeply indebted.

To-day the job at the pump was particularly hard ; the visions behind her brow made it so. There were many visions and they faded into each other : the stationary motor-cars with their stolid, miserable occupants ; the lean, reddish-blond head of her father with the merry, angry blue-grey eyes and the many little wrinkles ; the refugee boy on the garden wall of the Hotel de la Poste, looking at her angrily after she had given him the Roblechon cheese ; little Père Bastide standing in his bay window helpless, furious, touching, and ridiculous.

But her young, lean face showed nothing of the visions

behind her brow. The others looked at her disapprovingly, disdainfully, as she went about her unsavoury business, the beggar princess who earned neither thanks nor profit, the unworthy daughter of Pierre Planchard. And she stood there and heard the words of the exploited and tried not to hear them; tried not to hear the talk of the packers and drivers and still heard every word.

It was a blessing that Maurice, at least, was not there.

Behind her was the front of the big garage. Through the open window near her came the splashing of the shower bath; this was the drivers' washroom, much used on these warm afternoons. She heard the men snorting and puffing. It was quite possible that Maurice was in there. In that case he might appear at any moment and she would no longer be spared his malicious remarks.

The expectation tormented her so much that she was almost relieved when he did appear in the garage entrance.

She stared straight ahead, but in fancy she saw every step he took, she saw his strong, bulky face, his somewhat thick-set figure; she saw him strolling with long, lazy, rolling steps to the others, she saw him nodding to them and saw them make room for him on the bench.

Maurice was young, he was insolent, his political views were opposed to those of Uncle Prosper. Uncle regarded him as a trouble-maker; Maurice wrangled instead of being grateful that Uncle had saved him from front-line service. But he was the best driver for miles around. In his early youth he had been Citroen's master lorry-driver and Uncle Prosper had paid a good price to get him from there. Maurice was popular with the other employees and to dismiss him would have caused trouble. So Uncle Prosper swallowed his wrath.

Now Maurice was sitting with the others, his blue shirt unbuttoned, and he listened to their talk. Of course the conversation concerned the refugees and the news from the front.

They would not believe that there actually was no longer

a front ; they would not admit the catastrophe. They spoke of the Maginot Line and said that Generals Pétain and Weygand must have a plan, and if they could not hold Paris they would defend the Loire River line. It would be impossible for France to collapse overnight.

"France?" interjected Maurice, who so far had been silent. "What France? Will you please explain to me, what France? That of the Two Hundred Families? Or that of the two million small investors? Or yours? Or mine? People have talked so much about France that it doesn't exist at all any more. What is France, anyhow?" he jeered. "Is it the lady on the postage stamps, the lady with the cap?" His voice was high, almost squeaking, but he was not excited. He spoke calmly with a sort of sharp politeness.

Simone stood by her red pump and did not appear to hear what they were saying, as they sat on the bench. But in her heart she was indignant at Maurice's words and that the others permitted him to speak thus. "What is this France?" Why don't they tell him? Everyone knows what France is, every one feels it. France is...is... She was aghast. Suddenly she discovered that she herself could not have said what France was. But she brushed away the shock at once. Of course it is difficult to formulate it in words upon such a sudden demand. But one can feel it. One belongs to France, is a part of it. And if Maurice does not feel it, he is a poor, unfortunate creature, a creature without a heart.

Meanwhile Maurice was explaining to the others, and not for the first time, that what was going on out there was not a real war. It had never been a war. It was not true that the Boches had defeated France in a real war. The fascists within, the Cagoulaards, the Flandins and Laval and Bonnets, had delivered the country over to their partisans beyond the Rhine. They had prepared it all long ago and Pétain, our old defeatist of Verdun, would not be able to change it. Maurice spoke of the connection of French monopolist capital with the German, of French industry with the German. One wolf does not devour the other. Of course

Hitler who guaranteed our fascists, "these gentlemen," a 60-hour week, would be more acceptable to them than Léon Blum who insisted on a 40-hour week. France was not overthrown by German tanks but by our own steel monopoly. Those were our good friends of the Two Hundred Families.

When Maurice, with his high, sometimes squeaking voice, spoke about "these gentlemen," it did not sound vague and general like it had with Père Bastide. It sounded sharp and certain.

Simone, standing at her pump, confessed that a certain deliberate reality sounded out of Maurice's words. It was just this self-confidence that provoked one, and if one resisted it, then Maurice would produce figures and facts and one would lose the argument. A few times someone had doubted his figures but he had always been proved right.

But Simone did not dream of being convinced by his silly figures and facts. In her heart she passionately rejected them. He was not fair, he never saw the other side. For him there was only white or black, right or left. For him everyone who did not agree with him was a fool or a knave or a fascist.

"Maybe we could have smoked out our Two Hundred Families," she heard him say now, "when we were united with the left-wing bourgeois party and had the majority. But when the time to act came our bourgeois friends showed no backbone. That is always so. When the going gets hard our allies of the other class always desert us, even the well-meaning ones."

The others were quiet. Maurice pointed up to the private office of Monsieur Planchard. "Old Swank-pot up there always pretended to be a patriot," he orated. "He always was an opponent of the Marquis, the fascist; but there you have it, now he is making a deal with him."

"Shut your dirty mouth," said the old driver Richard, good-naturedly. "The boss talks a lot, I will admit, but when one needs him, he opens his purse. It was most noble of him to furnish two cars for the refugees."

"Yes," sneered Maurice, "the two shabby old Peugeot. The refugees will be lucky if they get as far as Nevers with them. And though Old Swank-pot is a generous man, he has taken precautions in case they demand more of him."

"You are not fair," the packer Georges contended. "You've got it in for him."

"I only see what I see," answered Maurice, "and you have let him talk you blind. The refugees need petrol more than bread. He has his tanks full of black-market petrol. I have not noticed that he gives any to them."

"Everyone has black-market petrol," said old Richard calmly, and spat. And: "He gave the petrol for the two Peugeots," added the packer Georges.

"I am no prophet," said Maurice, "but I tell you now when it gets dangerous Old Swank-pot will tie himself to the apron-strings of the Two Hundred Families."

"It's dangerous now," old Richard said.

Maurice turned his brown, intelligent eyes to the other, smiling slyly. "Right," he answered, "and I'll bet a bottle of Pernod and ten packets of Gaulois that in the end it's not the refugees who will get his cars, but the Chatelain, for moving his wines."

Simone loved her Uncle Prosper. He had taken care of her and replaced her father. She belonged to the family. He liked her and was attentive to her. When he went to the pictures he took her with him; when he went on a trip he always bought her something. Last year he had taken her to Paris for two weeks. He was friendly to everyone, he had a heart for everybody. Everyone, even if they grumbled about him at times, liked him. Only Maurice hated him, Maurice abused him out of hatred. It always hurt her when Maurice called him "Old Swank-pot."

The packer Georges was right: Maurice "had it in for him." Maurice had it in for everybody who had money. He was full of prejudice, a spiteful person.

He needn't be so high and mighty, that Maurice, she said to herself. He is criticizing Uncle Prosper because he

making a deal with the Chatelain ; but he himself hides behind Uncle Prosper to dodge being called up. Others fight and die under the tanks, and he stands under the shower bath and then sits comfortably in the shade and smokes and talks. I won't listen to him any longer, I'll pay no attention to him.

But now she could not help hearing him state with provocative self-confidence : "In the end it's always we little fellows who foot the bill. We are always the ones who pay"; and she could not prevent this sentence from sinking into her consciousness.

She tried hard to take her mind off Maurice. But although she stared straight ahead she always saw only him as he sat there comfortably smoking, with his open blue shirt, and the others listening to him.

She had not noticed that he looked at her even once. Yet she was convinced that his words were intended for her too. He did not count her among the little people, although she did not possess a red cent. If the worst came to the worst, he expected her, like Uncle Prosper, to crawl before the Two Hundred Families. And she was quite sure that he would soon say something nasty about her in his insolent tone.

Now he paused briefly. He was still not looking at her but she felt that he was putting his left hand on his hip ; he always did that before he said something particularly vicious. Here it came, the insulting, nasty word which she feared and expected.

"Well," she heard his high impudent voice, "I see the honourable niece is out soliciting again."

Simone was rigid. She pretended to be deaf. She had never heard the expression "out soliciting," but she was quite certain that what Maurice had just said was the worst thing that could be said about anyone.

What had she ever done to Maurice to make him hate her so ? She would have liked to cry, but she controlled herself and continued to stare straight ahead. Of course her face

himself hides was fiery red but that proved nothing. It was fearfully
up. Others hot, she was standing in the sun, and naturally her face
ds under the was red.

he shade and Maurice was regarded as a good fellow. Everybody went
onger, I'll pay to him for advice ; he was not stingy with his advice and his
advice was good. Maurice was a *débrouillard*, one who can
ate with pro- worm out of the most complicated situations. He racked
ways we little his brain for others ; he helped many and was always con-
nces who pay"; cerned for others. But he was not a good fellow where she
a sinking into was concerned.

And yet he was an adherent of her father. He, said
But although Maurice, had been an idealist and a romantic like Jaurès,
him as he sat but he had been a true comrade as well ; and that was prob-
shirt, and the ably the highest praise that anyone could expect from
Maurice. Yet he derided and insulted her at every oppor-
ten once. Yet tunity. He did not regard her as the daughter of Pierre
d for her too. Planchard but as a member of the Villa Monrepos family,
although she one of the high and mighty folk, one of his enemies.

to the worst, What did he want her to do ? In return for all his
wl before the generosity Uncle Prosper expected her to work for him.
sure that he That was his privilege. It was vile of Maurice to jeer at her
n his insolent because she did her work.

Why was she so hateful in his eyes ? He was otherwise
looking at her friendly to girls ; impudent but still friendly. They say he
on his hip ; he likes girls. They say he has many girls.

ularly vicious. Sometimes Simone was tempted to corner Maurice and to
ch she feared ask him why he disliked her. But she restrained herself and
kept silent. This time too she did not show him how much
he was hurting her.

e, "I see the With a defiant face she stood at her red pump and did
her duty. She was "out soliciting." Now more than ever.
eaf. She had And to-morrow she would do it again. And the day after
she was quite to-morrow. She had her own pride. And some day,
e worst thing perhaps, Maurice would discover that he had done her an
injustice.

him hate her She looked at the big clock over the office entrance. If
trolled herself she wanted to keep her dignity, she had to stay the full hour.
urse her face

She could not leave until then and there was still eighteen minutes to go.

Eighteen long minutes. Her tanned, reddened, perspiring face seemed calm, but behind her broad stubborn brow pictures and thoughts became more and more tormentingly confused. Uncle Prosper and the Chatelain, "the fascist," with whom he was making a deal in his private office, the Roblechon cheese which she gave the boy on the garden wall; the steel monopoly, the Two Hundred Families, and the lawyers with their black robes and caps and white neck-frills and all their trickery. Maurice who was friendly to all the girls and insulted her with his poisonous talk; the picture of Jean Jaurès, the romantic and idealist, standing like a colossus before his huge flag and under the picture, nodding in his arm-chair, Père Bastide, helpless and aged.

Seven minutes more.

Finally, the time was up; she could go. With a firm, hard stride she walked across the yard. "Good-bye, mademoiselle," shouted Maurice in his high, impudent voice. It sounded commonplace and yet it felt like a blow. "Good-bye," she answered. She tried hard to sound commonplace too, but her voice was deep and resonant; she had the beautiful voice of the Planchards and it sounded like a challenge.

She deposited the key in the office and left. She fetched her basket from the Deputy Prefecture. It had become cooler. And yet the way seemed long and hot and the basket very heavy.

III

VILLA MONREPOS

SIMONE entered the living-room; she had washed herself thoroughly and got ready for supper. She was wearing her brown dress with a little apron over it. She ate with the

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still eighteen family, but she frequently had to go to the kitchen to put the final touches to the meal and to serve it.

Uncle Prosper would come home later than usual to-day ; probably very late, he had announced in the morning. Madame, too, was still up in her room. So Simone had a few moments of leisure. She sat there idly, her large, clean, work-roughened hands in her lap. She was quite worn out from trouble and excitement. But now there was only the supper and the dish-washing left to be done.

The room was dusky and quiet. The large chamber—they called it the Blue Room—was richly furnished with stately Burgundian furniture. Formerly the Planchards had lived in the old town, but a few years ago Uncle Prosper had built this comfortable house, the Villa Monrepos, out here, far from the office, to the east of the city. It stood out in the open with a beautiful view of the winding Cerein valley on one side and of the wooded mountains and the hamlet Noiret on the other.

Simone sat in a small chair, well aware of her inferior position in the Planchard's house ; the poor relation, who had been taken in out of pity. The large, portière-draped door to the dining-room stood open, and Simone mechanically surveyed the supper table. She had set it carefully, for the Villa Monrepos ate with traditional formality. There were many plates, many glasses, much silver ; everything had its exact place and its exact order ; the menu had been thoroughly discussed the day before. Simone rapidly reviewed everything. The tongs for the snails and the finger-bowls were there ; the Chablis stood in its ice-pail ; the plates for the leg of lamb had to be very hot ; the Pommard lay in its basket so as to attain the right room temperature. The salad bowl and its wooden implements were within reach in the kitchen ; the chervil had already been cut. That really should have been done just before serving, but then the break between the roast and the salad would be too long ; in any case it was not easy to keep the break between the snails and the roast short enough. The liqueurs and the

She fetched exact place and its exact order ; the menu had been thoroughly discussed the day before. Simone rapidly reviewed everything. The tongs for the snails and the finger-bowls were there ; the Chablis stood in its ice-pail ; the plates for the leg of lamb had to be very hot ; the Pommard lay in its basket so as to attain the right room temperature. The salad bowl and its wooden implements were within reach in the kitchen ; the chervil had already been cut. That really should have been done just before serving, but then the break between the roast and the salad would be too long ; in any case it was not easy to keep the break between the snails and the roast short enough. The liqueurs and the

orange marmalade for the crêpes Suzettes stood on the sideboard ; Uncle Prosper made it a point to finish off the crêpe himself at the table.

The room became noticeably darker. Simone had already closed the shutters and lowered the blinds in the other room to comply with black-out regulations. Here, in the Billiard Room and the dining-room, she would do it when Madar came down. Simone preferred the dusk to the electric light.

Madame entered.

Simone was always astonished at Madame's soft tread although she was tremendously fat and heavy ; her breath was louder than her step.

As usual, Madame wore a black silk dress and her hair was carefully done. It was not exactly white, but curious mottled. Madame was probably in the early or middle sixties. Simone did not know exactly ; Madame's age was never mentioned in the Villa Monrepos.

Simone had risen. "You might pull the blinds," said Madame softly. She was always polite, never excited, or at least she never showed it, and she rarely scolded. Yet even her order she gave sounded like a reproach, and when Madar was in sight it always seemed to Simone that her every move was supervised by a stern eye.

Simone pulled the blinds and switched on the light in both rooms. The bulbs were large and bright ; Madame loved very bright lights. Simone sat down in the small chair again, but now she was no longer relaxed ; her leisure was over, she was back on duty.

Madame also had sat down in the wing chair in which she awaited Uncle Prosper's return each evening. She was not tall, but of enormous girth, and she sat there stiffly, her flesh confined in a corset. Her small, hard eyes were not directed at Simone, but her very presence made Simone feel small and oppressed. Madame was not talkative. She sat there, breathing a bit heavily because of her weight, calmly waiting.

Simone knew that this calmness was simulated. Uncle Prosper was a bachelor and no saint ; it sometimes happened that he made a call on some lady or other on his way home. Recently there had been all sorts of malicious gossip at the loading yard about his relations with the wife of Doctor Mimerelles, who was in the army. Madame probably knew of this gossip. She did not see many people but she had the telephone, the newspapers, and her two friends in Saint-Martin, old ladies who visited her occasionally. With uncanny insight she put two and two together and usually knew about things even before they happened. She loved her son and all her thoughts centred on him ; every quarter of an hour she wondered where he might be and what he was doing. Simone was aware that Madame did not approve of Uncle Prosper's mode of life.

Behind Madame's apparent calm Simone felt her growing nervousness. To be sure, Uncle Prosper had prepared her for his late return ; it was to be expected in times like these, and it was highly improbable that Uncle Prosper would choose to-day for a visit to his friend. And yet every minute Madame's suspicion that Monsieur Planchard was keeping his mother waiting on account of this bitch of a Madame Mimerelles grew stronger.

Madame sat in her wing chair, black and straight, in the brilliance of the electric lights. Her head was pressed down stiffly so that the enormous double chin projected even more than usual ; her stomach and thighs were a single swollen mass, her forearms rested on the arms of the chair ; person and arm-chair merged into one. Breathing heavily but without motion she sat there like a gigantic idol.

It was strange how different her son was from Madame Planchard. Uncle Prosper probably inherited much of his appearance and character from his father.

This father of his—the old Monsieur Henri Planchard, Madame's deceased husband, Simone's grandfather,—had had a son from an earlier marriage, Pierre Planchard, Simone's father. It was astonishing that Madame, the richest and

most respected girl in Saint-Martin, had married Henri, a penniless engineer, a widower with a nine-year-old son.

Once again Simone reviewed what she knew about this Henri Planchard, her grandfather. They said he had been a man of imagination, very attractive, versatile and interested in many things outside of his business, a spendthrift. Madame, stern, tight-fisted, stubborn, probably had had no easy life with him nor he with her. The traits in Uncle Prosper's character which Madame opposed and which Simone liked probably came from this Henri Planchard.

"It's too bad that there wasn't any Roblechon," said Madame at length. "My son will miss it." She always spoke of Uncle Prosper as her son or as Monsieur Planchard. Simone did not answer; she did not even blush. Her slightly sulky face only became more expressionless. At this very moment she would certainly have given the Roblechon once more to the boy on the garden wall.

"What is it like in town?" Madame asked suddenly. Ordinarily she never directed such questions at Simone but made it a point to get all information from her own private sources. But now, since the telephone was out of order, her connection with the city was cut off and her inner tension too great to bear in silence.

Simone was reluctant to tell Madame how deeply the spectacle of the refugees had moved her. She reported dryly and awkwardly that the number of refugees had greatly increased and that they were suffering from hunger. Also that many people had fled from Saint-Martin, Messieurs Amiot, Laroche, Raimu, and others.

Madame's features remained rigid in the strong light and her gigantic bosom continued to rise and fall gently. But: "Give me a cigarette," she commanded, and Simone knew how greatly the information had affected her; for Madame smoked only rarely, and only when she was excited.

"So they're fleeing," she repeated Simone's words after a while, "they're running away, they're taking to their heels." The voice came clearly, softly, and disdainfully from her

massive face of to-day Monsieur Planchard in Monsieur Planchard the lurch in surprised in again. The Madame of the rolls afraid that She thought misery-laden, exhausted so girl who, in mud from running away cowardly" "Don't voice. Ma blushed at every insult, "wer father had be impertin ever uttered They sat oppressive It wasn't a very impu irritated, h he really li to her. Se adult, som her, as, fo frank opin Neverthele

massive face. "No discipline," she continued. "The France of to-day has no more discipline. I am disappointed in Monsieur Laroche and in Monsieur Raimu, and particularly in Monsieur Amiot. A shopkeeper who leaves his shop in the lurch in such a time of need is a deserter. He needn't be surprised if his customers desert him when times are normal again. These people are as stupid as they are cowardly."

Madame smoked. Her small, bright eyes peered hard out of the rolls of flesh. Simone stared straight ahead. She was afraid that Madame might see the resentment in her face. She thought of the child carrying the cat over the hot, misery-laden highways of France; she thought of the exhausted soldiers with their bloody feet; she thought of the girl who, in all that crowd, was trying to scratch the crusted mud from the blue enamelled perambulator. "They're running away, they're taking to their heels. Stupid and cowardly"—that was all that Madame felt about these people.

"Don't be impertinent," she suddenly heard Madame's voice. Madame spoke calmly but Simone was startled and blushed deeply. It was uncanny how Madame guessed every insubordinate thought. Insubordination, "impertinence," were the worst crimes in Madame's eyes. Simone's father had been impertinent and he had perished. "Don't be impertinent" was the sharpest reprimand that Madame ever uttered.

They sat in silence. It was hard to sit so still in Madame's oppressive presence; she longed for Uncle Prosper's arrival. It wasn't always easy with Uncle Prosper either. He was very impulsive, he let himself go, and sometimes, when irritated, he said unjust things which made her angry. But he really liked Simone and usually he was sincerely friendly to her. Sometimes he spoke confidentially to her as to an adult, sometimes even so confidentially that it embarrassed her, as, for example, at the cinema when he expressed his frank opinion about the feminine qualities of the actresses. Nevertheless he was a person to whom she often, i

of the time, felt drawn. But Madame remained strange and hostile; only to look at her made her cold.

"Turn on the radio," said Madame after a while. Simone did so. Out of the radio came the six notes of the Marseillaise which one always heard now in the pauses between bulletins: "Aux armes, citoyens." They waited. They waited for Monsieur Planchard and for news bulletins.

Madame extinguished her cigarettes. "Give me the paper," she demanded. "It's an old one," replied Simone. "I know," said Madame, not impatiently, only coldly. Simone brought the papers, a three-day-old *Dijon Dépêche* and an old *Echo de Paris* that Uncle Prosper had brought home yesterday. Madame took a lorgnon from her pocket and read the Dijon local news which she had repeatedly studied before.

Presently she closed her eyes. She still sat stiff and quiet, but the lorgnon and the paper had dropped to her lap. There she sat, evil and peaceful.

Simone's discomfort did not decrease. She dared not even turn off the radio. Out of the instrument came those bars of the Marseillaise at brief intervals, preventing her even from thinking sensibly. She sat in her small chair under the bright light and found the sitting and waiting intolerable.

Steps in the garden. At last. She flew to the front door to help her uncle find his way in out of the dark.

As soon as she saw him her anxiety vanished. The house changed. It was no longer like a coffin; it was now filled with life.

Uncle Prosper went over to Madame, who remained seated. He had grown a little heavier in the past two years, but his movements were brisk and masculine, though perhaps the briskness was becoming more of an effort. He looked well in his grey suit; he made it a point to dress carefully and with taste. He embraced Madame, and Simone noticed that she sniffed at him for lingering traces of perfume to see whether he had called on a woman.

"Of course I had to walk home," he reported. "It's out of the question to get through with the car. But the walk

did me good," he continued with a smile, "and I've worked up an awful appetite. Let's eat right away. I'll only wash my hands. You've waited long enough. Now we deserve something good."

Then they sat down, and while Uncle skilfully drew his snails out of their wine- and butter-filled shells and ate them with relish, he spoke of the day's events. It was assumed, he said, that the alleged French official orders to evacuate additional territory really came from the Boches for the purpose of increasing the confusion. At any rate, the panic was contagious, half of France was now in flight, all roads were jammed, preventing military movements, and the government could not cope with the situation. He had seen heart-rending sights. However, it was his opinion that the authorities should not permit false pity for the fugitives to deter them from radical measures. If there was no other way, they would have to drive the refugees from the roads by force.

There he sat, distinguished, vigorous, handsome. Simone waited to see when he and Madame would finish their snails so that she could remove the plates promptly and serve the roast. At the same time she listened to Uncle Prosper's words.

"Of course I am glad," she heard him say, "that we are not the ones forced to take such harsh measures. It's a good thing that we, at least, are permitted to have human feelings."

He leaned back and his expressive, masculine features bore an embarrassed smile. "I must make a confession, Mother," he resumed. "I put two cars at the disposal of the Deputy Prefecture for the fugitives. I made no terms, but simply gave them the cars. I couldn't help myself."

Simone's heart grew warm. In Uncle Prosper's words she heard the sincere satisfaction it had given him to furnish these cars to save forty or fifty people.

His voice was deep and full. Her father's voice must have sounded like that. Indeed Uncle Prosper had much in common with her father; the heavy, reddish-blond hair, the

lively, blue-grey eyes made bushy brows, the well-shaped lips. Many people said that he looked like the full brother of Pierre Planchard and now, as he sat there, a little ashamed of his generous act, Simone was very conscious of the similarity.

Madame regarded her son with her small, prying eyes. "I fear you will get small thanks for it," she said at length. "You are too good, my boy. Isn't it indiscreet to give away two cars in these times?"

Uncle Prosper laughed. "Let me be indiscreet, Mother," he said.

Simone carried the dishes out and prepared to serve the roast. As she was bringing it in her uncle was just saying that it was the patriotic duty of every business man to keep cool. Simply by going about their usual business these men could do much to calm the populace. The very sight of an open office had a quieting effect. It was scandalous that so many business people yielded to panic.

Red and juicy the slices of roast lamb lay on the hot plates, covered with dark brown, fragrant gravy; the heavy, deep red wine flowed into the wide, tall glasses.

Of course, continued Uncle as he ate, it could not be denied that there was serious danger. Although the territory around Saint-Martin had no strategic importance, the Boches might still occupy it.

"Certain gentlemen," replied Madame in her low, hard tone, "seem to expect that. I have heard that certain gentlemen have left, fled, run away."

"Yes," confirmed Uncle Prosper. "Imagine, Mother, even the bookkeeper, Peyroux, usually such a sensible fellow, quite innocently asked me whether I was not going to leave too."

Madame raised her lips in a sneer. "The common riffraff," she commented, "is even more stupid than we think. I can't see why the highways should be safer than our homes. And even if the Boches should come, I can't see why it should

be to their interest to kill us. It is certainly to their advantage to have life continue."

They had finished with the roast and Simone helped her uncle prepare the salad. He bent over the dish and his right ear was very close to her ; it was pointed at the top and strangely thick. Suddenly she was aware of the great difference between her father and her uncle. When his eye became piercing, when he relaxed and slumped down heavily, he resembled Madame rather than his half-brother.

She carried away the plates. When she returned with the pancakes for the crêpes suzettes her uncle was telling of the Chatelain's visit.

Simone knew that Uncle Prosper and the Marquis de Saint-Brisson differed politically, but that it was a matter of pride with Uncle to maintain social relations with the aristocrat. On the rare occasions when the Marquis appeared in the Planchard office, Uncle had always spoken of it as a great event ; so to-day's visit was probably also memorable. Simone was all the more astonished that he did not make much of this visit, but spoke of it as if it had been a call by Monsieur Aniot or Monsieur Laroche. And Madame spoke in the same tone. "Yes, indeed," she said casually, "now the Chatelain comes trotting round."

Still talking, Uncle Prosper skillfully prepared the crêpes suzettes over the little spirit heater. He poured the liqueur on the pancakes and rocked the bluish flame back and forth. The Marquis he elaborated, wanted to have his vintage wines taken out of danger to Bayonne, in the extreme south-west. Of course, in times like these, he said magnanimously, one did favours to an old customer, in spite of political differences. But the matter was not as simple as the Marquis imagined, he added with broad obvious irony.

Simone was happy. Evidently Uncle Prosper had roundly refused the Chatelain's proposal. She remembered Maurice's sneering challenge : "I'll bet a bottle of Pernod the Marquis will get our lorries for his wines." She knew all the time Maurice was a liar and a slanderer.

"That's what our little Simone likes," said Uncle Prosper now, pointing at the bluish flame and patting her. Simone blushed and recoiled the least bit. When she was a child her uncle had often taken her on his lap, and he had never given up stroking and petting her. Of late this worried her sometimes.

Crusted with butter and sugar, sweetly fragrant, the pancakes lay on the plate. For a moment the scene at the Place du Général Gramont with the parked refugee vehicles stood vividly before Simone's eyes. It seemed unreal to her that she was seated in this bright, spacious room at the well-stocked table and that they were eating snails and roast lamb followed by pancakes, while they chatted calmly.

"I feel we will not be able to finish our meal undisturbed," announced Uncle Prosper. "Philippe is coming out." Philippe Cordelier was the deputy prefect of the country.

Madame looked up with some surprise. "Philippe came in to see me yesterday," Monsieur Planchard went on, "at the office. We agreed that it was wiser to continue our discussion privately. The government wants to hire all my lorries."

Madame succeeded in mastering her amazement. She took her lorgnette and scrutinized her son's face. "Oh, la la," was all she said, and that with just a little derision. But Simone's face was silly with bewilderment, and it took some time before she absorbed the news. She drew her brows together so that her forehead and nose became wrinkled, and pondered over the matter.

At the loading yard there had been talk some days ago that, in case of extreme need, the authorities would requisition the lorries. Now the time had probably come for the deputy prefect to take over the Planchard establishment on behalf of the refugees. But Monsieur Cordelier had very good, even friendly, relations with Uncle Prosper. Uncle Prosper was the most prominent man in the country; he had rendered the government valuable service at elections. The deputy prefect was under an obligation to him and did not wish to

offend this influential man. That was why he was making this long trip at night to the Villa Monrepos. He wanted to get what he could out of Uncle Prosper in an amicable way.

The furrow in Simone's sulky young brow deepened; she looked far older than her years. Had she been mistaken to be so happy over Uncle Prosper's gift of the two Peugeots? Unwillingly she recalled Maurice's vicious interpretation: "And now old Swank-pot is a generous man and has done his bit in case they demand more of him."

"Of course I expect to do my share to facilitate moving the refugees," Uncle Prosper declared. "But they'll have to leave the method to me. To take the whole establishment away from me is just a little thick. Don't you think so too, Mother? And where will Philippe get the drivers? Where will he send the various lorries? I am certainly a friend of the government, but in times like these the usual administrative routine won't do. In a catastrophe such as we are experiencing, the bureaucrats, the pen-pushers would do well to turn matters over to capable business men who know the local conditions."

His deep, plaintive voice sounded convinced and convincing. Simone had often heard such statements from him. He really believed that if he had his way he could do more about moving the refugees than the deputy prefect. But Simone could not forget Maurice's words, and the high, squeaky tone in which he always said "Old Swank-pot" accompanied everything that Uncle Prosper said.

Simone had the gift of visualizing events that might take place in the future. She saw the Chatelain's huge wine casks being loaded on to the well-built lorries of the Planchard Company, she saw them drive through the stream of refugees, powerful lorries supplied with all essentials, with fuel, with spare parts, and with experienced drivers who knew the roads at the wheel. She saw the fugitives, broken down by the roadsides, looking after the lorries with dull, dead eyes.

Uncle Prosper had stopped eating although a piece of pancake still lay on his plate. Simone got up to clear the

table but he held his hand over the plate and poured himself a little more wine. With the crêpes they drank a light, sparkling Anjou. "Just a moment, little one," he said, cheerful. "Don't begrudge me the last of my crêpes."

"You were at the garage to-day, selling petrol," he continued approvingly. It had been worth while too. The amounts that were taken in at the petrol pump were not inconsiderable. He was now profiting from the prudence which he had shown in buying plenty of petrol in time. In these times one had to be especially careful to watch one's interests. He leaned back and played with his napkin. He gave Simone a pleased look and she blushed a little. Just in passing she thought of Doctor Mimercelles' wife who was blonde and plump. To Simone Uncle Prosper had said the other day: "You are skinny as a whippet."

It was a real compensation for the day's troubles, he said comfortably, to open one's heart in the family circle in the evening. A cosy supper was the best relaxation, he said, and politely raised his glass of very light-coloured wine, first to Madame then to Simone.

Just as he put the last bite into his mouth steps sounded from the garden. "Well," he sighed, "at least we have finished the crêpes," and he wiped his mouth while Simone went to the door.

Monsieur Philippe Cordelier, the deputy prefect, blinked in the light of the hall. The tall, lean, slightly bent gentleman, who always looked a little worried, seemed particularly agitated to-day. Mechanically fingering the rosette of the Legion of Honour in his lapel, he said a little absently to Simone who took his stick: "Good evening, my dear child. It was a difficult trip to-day"; and more to himself than to Simone he spoke of the hardship of the walk through the dark. At every step one stumbled over cars and people. It had taken him more than an hour. Once he had completely lost his way. His pale eyes were still blinking.

Simone led him to the dining-room. Monsieur Planchard greeted him verbosely. Although he sometimes referred to

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oured himself the deputy prefect as a not over intelligent person, he always rank a light, treated him with the respect due the highest official in the country. Sometimes, as to-night, his courtesy was mixed with a scarcely noticeable, ironically jovial condescension.

"The walk seems to have exhausted you, Philippe," he said, and slapped him on the shoulder. "You'd better recover a bit first. We are still waiting for our coffee and you'll have it with us."

"We will take our coffee in the Blue Room, Simone," said Madame, politely and frigidly. She was speaking to the maid, not to her husband's granddaughter.

Simone cleared the table and made the coffee. When she brought the glass coffee urn, the cups, and the cognac into the living-room, the men were comfortably settled and smoking. Madame was smoking too. That was the second time to-night, and it wasn't good for her. Simone knew why Madame took that risk. Madame always smoked when important business was being transacted; it gave her a chance to effect pauses in the discussion and to think of sharper replies.

Although the old lady must have been very tired owing to the lateness of the hour and the long wait for her son, she sat up straight in her wing chair, her huge body confined in its corset, the great double chin pressed down, and showed no sign of fatigue. Obviously she found it desirable to supervise the conversation between the deputy prefect and her son. "Close the door to the dining-room, Simone," she ordered when Simone had poured the coffee out and was leaving the room. It was clear that she did not want Simone to hear anything in the kitchen.

But in spite of the closed doors the voices from the living-room penetrated to her while she washed up the dishes. The high-pitched, hollow voice of Monsieur Cordelier was excited; he was evidently demanding the surrender of the lorries. Uncle Prosper also replied excitedly; he spoke loudly and rapidly; his voice rang out more than ordinarily. Then again, there was complete silence and Simone knew that

Madame was speaking. When she spoke, no matter how softly, every one was silent and listened.

Simone could imagine the course of the discussion in there, and she knew how it would end. There had been differences between the Deputy Prefecture and the Planchard Company on previous occasions, but Monsieur le Sous-Préfet had never carried his point. Nor would he be able to do it to-day, especially now that Madame was taking part in the conversation. "I bet a bottle of Pernod the refugees will not get the lorries." The only reward that Monsieur le Sous-Préfet would have for his hard walk through the night would be his coffee and his cognac.

She really should not think so maliciously of Uncle Prosper. She should not see him through the evil eyes of Maurice, who jeered and spoke ill of everyone. Uncle Prosper was regarded as a humanitarian, as the benefactor of Saint-Martin. And so he was. He had always been a father to her. When she recalled the cheerful, companionable understanding with which he accepted all her childish fancies, her heart warmed to him. And how magnanimous he was that time in Paris. He spared no time, effort or money to make her stay pleasant. He took her everywhere, showed her everything. She ate in the best restaurants, went to the opera, and if she wanted anything from a shop he bought it. He even accepted her whims gracefully. When they were in Notre Dame, she recalled, he wanted to go up into the steeple and she refused. Without a reason. She could not tell him that she did not want to spoil the memory of her father, but he agreed without urging her. And if he wanted an evening to himself he saw to it that she wasn't alone in the hotel. On one such evening she went to the Louvre with the children of a business friend of his ; it was an evening when the statues were illuminated. She would never forget how she stood breathlessly before the Winged Victory, and how she lay awake all night wondering what the head of the woman had been like.

She really had a wonderful time in Paris with Uncle

Prosper. He did a great deal for her. He was always happy when he was doing something for others.

It's a queer thing: he liked her and yet he permitted Madame to treat her with coldness and hostility. Simone was unassuming and had not even an inner resentment against doing menial work. But Madame often assigned her unnecessary work, just to make her feel that she was only a maid. Why did Uncle Prosper permit that?

He probably shrank from quarrelling with Madame. He respected Madame for she was very shrewd. Uncle Prosper never closed a deal of any consequence without consulting her. Madame would never permit him to do otherwise. She still owned the major interest in the company and, although she always stressed the fact that her son was the head of the firm, she would not dream of leaving the management of its affairs to him alone.

Simone understood Uncle Prosper's attitude, and yet she was hurt that he did not defend her more vigorously against Madame. He was pleasant to her in Madame's presence but he gave no indication of the true affection which he sometimes showed her when they were alone.

Was she being ungrateful? All evening she had found fault with Uncle Prosper in her heart. She was bitter when Maurice nagged at everything, but was she different?

Of course her father had been eternally dissatisfied too. That was the charge against him, that he nagged and found fault with everything. He had been insubordinate by nature, his Pierre Planchard; he was "impertinent." He was so impertinent that he was now dead and gone. His nagging and fault-finding meant so much to him that he exposed himself to the danger of a mysterious death. And if people honoured his memory to-day, then it was because he was a nagger and a fault-finder.

Maurice evidently assumed that she was not like her father. Maurice evidently assumed that she was in agreement with the Villa Monrepos, where impertinence and insubordination were regarded as the worst of all crimes. But was she

really in agreement? Wasn't she one of the rebels, one of the insubordinates, like her father?

The voices in the living-room became louder again; the voice of the deputy prefect was shrill and violent. Monsieur Xavier, the secretary of the Deputy Prefecture, who ought to have known, once said that Monsieur Cordelier was a decent fellow who, however, spoiled matters by his conciliatory attitude and his lack of decision. Simone had herself experienced this. Monsieur le Sous-Préfet had always declared that he admired Pierre Planchard; but when the question arose of dedicating a memorial tablet to him, he finally yielded to the opposition of the notary Levautour. It ran through Simone's mind that Uncle Prosper acted very "correctly" at that time, probably upon Madame's advice. He declared that it was not proper for him, as Pierre Planchard's brother, to vote and to work for the memorial tablet. He remained neutral.

So much was certain: Monsieur le Sous-Préfet was not the man to gain a cause against strong opposition. The Planchard Company would not deliver the lorries to him. Simone heard him stopping in the middle of a sentence again; probably Madame was speaking.

While these thoughts ran through her mind, Simone was deftly washing and drying dishes, rinsing pots and pans, cleaning knives and forks, polishing silver. There was a lot of work, the whole day had been a hard one, and while her strong, reddened child-hands mechanically performed their labours, her back ached from exhaustion.

Before she had finished the dishwashing Madame came into the kitchen. She stood there and filled the kitchen with her weight, and her hard, beady eyes looked at Simone, at the pile of clean dishes, and at the heap of dirty silverware. There was no sound except her breathing and the dripping of water into the dishpan.

Simone continued to rub the silver of the snail-tongs. She had done nothing which merited a reproach, but still she

rebels, one of them felt uncomfortable while Madame stood and looked at her. She wished Madame would finally say what she wanted. "Leave the things as they are," Madame's soft voice at last issued from the heavy face, "and finish them to-morrow. It is late and you need sleep."

Simone was surprised. Madame had never before shown such consideration. "Thank you, madame," she said and dried her hands. Evidently Madame was afraid that she might hear too much of what was said in the Blue Room. "Good night, madame," she said and went up to bed.

IV

THE BOOKS

Simone's quarters did not exude the abundant comfort of the other rooms in the Villa Monrepos; it was a small, white-washed space with slanting roof; it was the servant's room. A few books stood on the chest, and on the wall hung a yellowed photograph of Pierre Planchard, clipped out of *Humanité*, a large, badly reproduced picture. The printer's ink from the reverse side showed through. There was also a coloured print of Saint Martin on his horse giving the beggar his coat; and another print representing two bearded grenadiers of the Grande Armée, who stand guard at the open coffin of a highly coloured Napoleon while large tears rolled down into their moustaches. There was also a fine large reproduction of the statue of the Winged Victory in the Louvre, a gift from Uncle Prosper.

Simone undressed, washed, and went to bed. She turned off the light. Downstairs the radio had been started, indistinct words, perhaps those of a news bulletin, were audible, then again the interval signal, the two bars of the Marseillaise: "*Aux armes, citoyens*," also indistinctly, so that Simone could only guess at them. The alarm clock ticked

softly, crickets chirped monotonously ; it was hot. Simone was dead tired, but soon she became aware that she would not sleep.

The books that Père Bastide had given her lay enticingly on the chest. Should she turn on the light and read ?

Madame did not like Simone to read in bed. She did not approve of her reading at all. Madame was suspicious of all book-learning, of all "theory," and, although it was scarcely mentioned, Simone knew that Madame attributed Pierre Planchard's ruin to his exaggerated intellectualism.

Simone, for her part, would have liked to acquire education and knowledge. Her teacher, Mademoiselle Rousseil, had actually regarded her as lazy and inattentive all through her school days. Not that Simone had been a poor pupil, but Mademoiselle Rousseil was of the opinion that, with a little more application, she could have achieved better results. But Simone was not lazy, only slow. What she mastered she grasped completely, and she knew how to use it.

Simone had always liked reading and Madame had always disapproved of this "mania for books." Madame had just now sent her up from her work so that she might get enough sleep, and Madame would certainly be annoyed if she should read in bed.

Simone could not endure, however, to be alone any longer with her thoughts in the dark, hot room. For the present Madame was occupied by Monsieur le Sous-Préfet. When she heard him leaving Simone would probably have time to turn off the light before Madame noticed it.

She switched on the light and took up Père Bastide's books.

These books all had to do with the Maid of Orleans.

Simone enjoyed reading about Joan of Arc ; this pleased Père Bastide and he always gave her more books about the Maid.

Of the three books which he had given her this time, one was fairly large. Père Bastide had bound it in sombre black cloth ; it seemed to be scholarly and somewhat dry.

was hot. Simon The second he had bound daintily in red, with a red leather
 e that she would back and red leather corners; it was easy to read, seemed
 fascinating, and was provided with many interesting illus-
 her lay enticing trations. The third was small, had an antique binding with
 and read? much gilt and ornamentation; it was worn and had been
 ed. She did not frequently read. It seemed to be a collection of legends and
 s suspicious of a moving anecdotes.

gh it was scarce How essentially simple was the story of this girl, Joan of
 attributed Pien Arc, and how many books had been written about her!
 ualism.

She had only reached the age of nineteen, just four years
 acquire education older than Simone; her entire story was confined to three
 lle Rousseil, h years and could be told in a few sentences. Nevertheless
 e all through his scholarship constantly added to the knowledge of Joan and
 a poor pupil, b her time, and constantly reinterpreted her character and
 hat, with a litt her fate.

ed better result It sometimes seemed to Simone that she understood Joan
 hat she master of Arc better than did all the learned writers. She read
 to use it. eagerly everything she found about the Maid and the story
 dame had always always moved her with the same mysterious power.

Madame had ju She had a good, reliable memory which retained all dates.
 might get enoug Joan, born in 1412, the daughter of a fairly well-to-do
 oyed if she shoul peasant, Jacques d'Arc, in Domremy, was a gentle, cheerful
 child, strong and apt in farm work. But then she heard the

alone any long voices of saints, and set out to visit the Royal Governor of
 For the present her district, and he sent her to the Dauphin, Charles the
 is-Préfet. Who Seventh, to advise him according to her voices and to anoint
 bly have time him as king. And the Dauphin entrusted his armies to

her, and with these armies she freed the besieged city of
 p Père Bastide Orleans, and defeated the English, and took Troyes and other
 cities, and crowned the Dauphin king at Rheims, as the voices
 of Orleans. had commanded her. Then, however, she seemed undesirable

Are; this pleas to the court, and they curtailed her powers and dismissed
 books about th her soldiers. She tried to attack Paris with insufficient
 troops, and she was wounded, and the attack failed. She
 er this time, o tried to liberate the city of Compiègne, but while she was
 nd it in som fighting outside the walls, her own partisans closed the city
 d somewhat de gate behind her and raised the drawbridge, and she was

captured by the Count of Luxembourg, and ally of the English. He sold her to the English for ten thousand pieces of silver, and they handed her over to the Inquisition for trial. The trial took place in 1431 and lasted from January 9 to May 24. She was sentenced to be burned alive. This took place on May 30 of the same year, when she was nine teen years and four months old.

There lay Simone Planchard, a healthy, somewhat lanky girl of fifteen, on the good, coarse linen sheet of her bed ; she lay on her stomach in her short nightgown, propped up on her elbows, and read the books about the Maid of Orleans. On the whitewashed walls about her were Saint Martin, her father, Pierre Planchard, Napoleon's grieving grenadiers, and the Goddess of Victory from the Louvre.

Since Simone was well acquainted with the story of the Maid, she did not, as usual, read page by page, but skipped about and picked out what seemed of particular interest to her.

She read of Joan's naïve pleasure in the splendour amid which she lived at the Dauphin's court. She read of the fine materials in which she was clothed, of her royal staple, of the glitter of her armour, of the costliness of her flags. The Scotch painter, Hamish Power, had painted two flags for her for the price of twenty-five livres : the large one was of white satin and represented Christ on the throne, behind Him the lilies of France ; the small one showed the Annunciation, and the angel was handing a lily to the Madonna.

Simone read that Joan had been strong, rather large, but not beautiful. She inspected the picture of the Maid which she found in the red-bound, exciting book. It was a reproduction of the statue in the museum of Domremy. The book said that the sculpture had not been done until several decades after Joan death, that the dress was not authentic, and that the statue was crude and clumsy, without artistic worth. But Simone particularly liked this picture. Joan must have looked just like that, she imagined—a little clumsy, and not at all out of the ordinary.

and ally of the Inquisition for a thousand pieces of gold. She read that she frequently did not lay aside her armour for days at a stretch, that she was always with men and appreciated crude jests. On the other hand, it was repeatedly stated that this clumsy girl in masculine armour spoke with a beautiful, round, entirely feminine voice.

somewhat lank For a moment Simone lowered her book and pondered. She picked up the book once more and read of the awful misery that had befallen the land in the days when Joan heard the voices. She read of the sufferings of the peasants of France, "What shall we do, we people of the soil?" they complained. "There is only one profession left: war. God is on the side of the soldiers; we can go to the devil. What concern of ours is all this slaughter? On account of bad government and treason we must leave our wives and children and hide in the woods like wild beasts. Not for a year or two but for fourteen or fifteen years this painful business has gone on. Most of the great lords of France have died by the sword, by poison, or treason, without benefit of extreme unction. We would be better off serving the Saracens than the Christians. Let us give no further heed to the orders of our masters. What can happen to us except to be captured and slain by the Godons?" That was the name by which they called the English, on account of the oath they pronounced, and instantly uttered: God damn.

And she read on: Near Meaux there stood a great elm on which the Bastard of Vauru, a nobleman from Gasconne, had had all peasants hanged whom he could catch and who were not able to pay ransom. He had had them tied to a horse and dragged there at a gallop. At times he even hanged them himself.

On one occasion he caught a young peasant, tied him to his horse, and dragged him at a gallop to Meaux. Then he had him tortured. Racked with pain and in the hope of saving his bones, the young fellow promised to pay three times as much as he owned. He sent for his wife to bring

the money ; they had only been married that year and she was about to have a child. Since she loved her husband, she came in the hope of touching the heart of his tormentor. The Lord of Vauru said : "If you do not bring the ransom by a certain day, I will hang your husband on my elm." Cursing her fate, she raised the money as quickly as possible, but she only succeeded a week after the fixed day. The tyrant, however, had hanged her husband on his elm as soon as the day had passed, without mercy. The young woman came and asked for her husband. She wept, for she had come the long way on foot and could scarcely stand on account of her pregnancy. She fainted. When she revived she again asked for her husband. They replied : "You vagabond, pay the money and we will show him to you." Then, as soon as she had paid the money, they said : "Your husband has, of course, been hanged, like the other bagabonds." Then her heart was filled with such pain and rage that she broke out into wild curses. When the deceitful villain, the Bastard of Vauru, heard her imprecations, he had her whipped and dragged at a gallop to his elm. There he had her stripped naked and bound. Above her in the branches some eighty to a hundred men were still hanging some high, some low. Those dangling low touched her head every time the wind swayed them and filled her with such fear that her legs gave way. The ropes with which she was tied cut into her flesh. "My God," she cried, "when will this pain cease?" The poor tortured creature cried so loud that she could be heard in the city of Meaux ; but no one who might have gone to help her would have been killed. Amid these grievous pains night fell. As she cried and as she was shaken by rain and wind and cold, she gave birth to her child. She screamed loudly, and the wolf-scented flesh, and came and devoured the child and the mother. So this miserable creature perished ; this happened in the month of March, in Lent, in the year 1420.

These were the things that Simone read about conditio

in France, occupied by the enemy and his allies, at the time when Joan of Arc heard the voices.

She read about these voices. They came to Joan most often when she was in the forest. They were the voices of the Archangel Michael, and, especially, the voices of Mesdames Sainte Cathérine and Sainte Marguérite.

And Simone read how Joan, obeying these voices, with the help of old Durand-Lassoir, a relative, set out to find the governor of her district, the Field Commander Robert de Baudricourt. She was wearing a poor, patched, red dress. As soon as she arrived in the castle she went fearlessly to Sire Robert and said: "I have come to you, sir, at the command of Messire, that you send word to the Dauphin he should remain quiet and not engage in battle. Before Mid-Lent Messire will send him aid."

The commander grinned. "Who is this Messire?"

"The King in Heaven," answered the Maid. "He has ordered me to lead the Dauphin to the unction and coronation. I must go to the Dauphin, even if it wears my legs off to the knees."

At this statement Sire de Baudricourt broke out into resounding laughter and told the relative to take the girl back to her father and tell him to box her ears. And when Joan refused to go, the general asked his soldiers whether they wanted to have their pleasure of her. But when the soldiers saw her, they had no inclination for her. That, Simone read, was the report of witnesses. The popular legend, however, pretended that among the brutal soldiers there was not one who dared to touch her.

Simone, with her gift of vivid imagination, pictured the scene when the great Lord Robert de Baudricourt received Joan and told her to "go soliciting" among his soldiers, and how perhaps some Maurice there tried to make indecent advances to her. And it filled her with satisfaction that the words stuck in his impudent mouth.

Then she pondered over the further course of Joan's life after she had returned home from the unsuccessful inter-

view with the great lord. It was probably not too easy. If, for example, Simone were now to go to Madame and tell her that she was about to leave for the Congo to continue her father's work, to instruct the colonists how to treat the natives, Madame would certainly send her about her business. The records stated that father d'Arc said he would rather drown Joan before he let her be a soldiers' whore. At the very least Joan's parents must have regarded their daughter as crazily adventurous. And her father probably took the commander's advice and boxed her ears thoroughly.

Therefore it was probably a good thing for Joan that immediately after her return the enemy threatened her village home, and the entire population had to seek safety in the neighbouring fortress of Neuf-Chateau. There her parents probably had little time to worry about her visit to the commander. And then, when the whole family eventually returned to Domremy, they found their village almost completely burned down by the enemy. It was not safe to live there, for the enemy still lurked near by. It was not the first time that they had fled to Neuf-Chateau, and they expected to leave Domremy again quite soon.

At that time too, then, there were fugitives in France, thought Simone. They fled, and returned to false security, and fled again. Things looked as desperate then as they did to-day. No, not as desperate. Joan did not experience such horrors as Simone did to-day. Or yet, perhaps she did. That affair with the wolves. We are sold out, we poor people, they complained then as now. But Joan did not give up. "I have come for the consolation of the poor people," she said, and she believed in her mission and carried it out.

Simone read about the self-assurance with which Joan moved about the army camp, the only woman among men, a little country girl amid great lords. She read how Joan, relying upon her mission, ordered these great lords about, these constables and marshals, without fear of their ancient names and great titles. Withal these lords were at heart

too easy. Her foes from the start, envious of her successes, and not at all willing to be supplanted by her.

Simone read about the man who worked most violently against Joan, the Duke Georges de la Trémoille. He was the Dauphin's favourite and always near him. He was powerful and very wealthy, and the Dauphin was in his debt. The Sire de la Trémoille was a portly man, cruel, fond of power, at the same time a sycophant, careful in his speech, and skilled in all trickery.

Simone read that Joan had few friends in court and camp, no matter how jubilantly the people acclaimed her. These friends were mostly very young gentlemen. The most interesting among them was Gilles de Laval, called de Rais. He was the richest man of France, had the title of Maréchal, and was extremely handsome. He was regarded as a great sensualist, surrounded himself with fabulous splendour, passionately loved the arts; he took his orchestra, his selected choir-boys, and his actors into the field with him. He was a great snob. He perfumed himself with exotic aromas; he dyed his moustache blue and thereby earned the popular name "Bluebeard."

Simone wondered why he would have been particularly drawn to Joan and she to him. That they were good friends, is certain. In camp she slept in the same tent with him and with other generals, and in Orleans, in the house of the ducal bookkeeper, Jacques Boucher, she and he occupied adjoining rooms.

Suddenly Simone listened. It seemed to her she heard doors open and close. Monsieur le Sous-Préfet was probably leaving. Quickly she laid her books aside and extinguished the light.

Yes, she heard voices, but could not tell from whence they came. She lay in the dark, in the heat; from without came the chirping of crickets, in the room was the ticking of the alarm clock. Simone waited for Madame to come upstairs and withdraw to her room. Then she might continue to read.

Now voices were heard in the hall. And now she heard steps in the garden, and the crickets were silent.

Simone lay and waited.

V

THE COMMISSION

THE doorbell rang. Simone ran to open the door. It was Monsieur Reynault, the postman, who wanted a signature. "I'll call Madame at once," said Simone. But Monsieur Reynault made a queer face : "No," he answered importantly, almost solemnly, "*you* must sign, Mademoiselle Simone," and he showed her a letter.

The letter looked like a mobilization order, but it was very large and continued to grow larger as Monsieur Reynault held it out. The envelop was made of heavy, expensive paper, and a seal hung from it with the words, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"; it was the coat-of-arms of the Republic.

"It's something very important," the postman repeated and cleared his throat. "You see, it says here : 'Official Business'." Simone looked and her heart beat violently. Excitedly, yet timidly, she reached for the letter. "Is it really for me?" she asked. Monsieur Reynault stood at attention and raised his hand to his cap as he answered : "Here it stands, clearly and plainly. That has never happened to anyone here before ; that is a great honour for all of Saint-Martin."

Simone stood and held the letter in her hand. The experience had given her a great scare ; her knees trembled and she sat down.

She read the letter undisturbed. It would be best to read it out here in the hall before Madame surprised her. She was hot with expectation, yet she hesitated. A wave of joy

flowed over her, but at the next moment she was oppressed with fear of the contents of the latter. Again and again she shrank from opening it. Moreover you couldn't just use your finger to tear open such an important envelope.

But then she saw suddenly the large, ivory letter-opener that lay on Uncle Prosper's table, and now she could not hesitate longer. She opened the letter.

The letter was written in antique characters; the initial letter of each paragraph was blue, red and gold. The letter said she was to report to the headquarters of the Dauphin on a special mission. "On a special mission" was underlined.

She trembled from head to foot and perspiration stood on her brow. To the headquarters, on a special mission. She was terribly frightened. Mademoiselle Rousseil had always said that she was not a good pupil and Simone was aware that she had no special talents. "On a special mission"; how would she acquit herself?

"What kind of a special mission is it?" she asked the letter. There it was written already, clearly and unmistakably: "Mademoiselle Planchard is to show the Dauphin which are his real enemies. Mademoiselle Planchard is to warn the Dauphin to fight these enemies. Mademoiselle Planchard shall not put her sword into its sheath until the Two Hundred Families are definitely and permanently defeated. Only then may Mademoiselle Planchard lead the Dauphin to Rheims and crown him king. Signed: The Mandator."

Simone dropped the letter into her lap and sat in complete dejection on the bench in the hall. She was filled with a tremendous fear. All those who tried to conquer the Two Hundred Families perished. Joan was burned, Jaurés was assassinated, her father was killed in the jungles of the Congo, and she was only fifteen years old, small and insignificant, a poor relation, a serving maid, who was ordered about politely, cruelly and inexorably by Madame. How could she accomplish such a momentous commission?

The more she thought about it the more heavily it oppressed

her. Why had the Mandator chosen her, of all people? The commission rested on her like a stone, became heavier and heavier, and crushed her.

"From whom do you come?" she asked the letter. "And are you good or evil?" and again the letter answered: There it was plainly in a postscript: "Don't be afraid. Your loving Father."

At once the weight fell from her. She was a little fool. She should have finished reading the letter before she yielded to panic. Her father required her to continue his work where he had to drop it. It was a disgrace that she didn't see this for herself. It really was splendid that he sent her the letter. It was a great honour. "When, if not now? And who else if not you?"

Suddenly the lorry-driver Maurice looked out of the garage window and grinned. Of course he knew nothing. He still believed that she belonged to the Villa Monrepos where impertinence and insubordination were regarded as the worst of all crimes. She was strongly tempted to tell him about the letter. But she had pride. When she executed her commission he would see it.

But he grinned harder and harder, and now he shouted something to her; she couldn't hear it, but she knew it was something nasty. She did not restrain herself any longer; she went to the garage, seized him by the sleeve of his leather jacket, and said: "Listen, Maurice, just take that smug smile from your face. I have received a letter from the Chancellery of the State. I am ordered to headquarters on a special mission." She said this very calmly, as though it happened every day.

Maurice was stunned for a moment; the smile vanished from his bullying face. But then he grinned again and said in his usual disdainful manner: "Tell that to your grandmother, mademoiselle. A letter. To the headquarters. Anybody can come and say that." Simone was enraged; she reached into her basket to show him the letter. But the letter was gone. Then the driver Maurice laughed; good-

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all people naturedly and contemptuously he said : " You see," and went off to the shower with his broad rolling gait.

Simone was crushed with humiliation. She couldn't have only imagined it all. She had read the letter—the characters were blue and red and gold. She had put the letter in the basket herself and the basket had become quite heavy because the letter was so large and weighty. And now Maurice probably imagined that she was making the whole thing up and despised her more than ever. He went off into the shower-room behaving as though she were not there at all, as if she were a mere nothing, and left the door open. She did not know where to turn for shame. And on top of it Henriette looked in at the window and said : " Shame, shame," and laughed at her.

Maurice stood under the shower ; his whole body was covered with spray so that one could see nothing ; besides, Simone did not look at all, and the waterfall said jeeringly : " Just a silly flapper. And she wants to go to the Dauphin. She ought to go back to the Villa Monrepos where she belongs." But suddenly a man entered, in slovenly dress, with a lean face and heavy reddish-blond hair and countless wrinkles around his shrewd blue-grey eyes. He sat down on the bench and crossed his legs and said pleasantly to Maurice : " Listen, monsieur, you are doing my little girl an injustice. I really sent her the letter. And now don't be stubborn, but ask her pardon, like a good fellow." Maurice had quickly wrapped himself in a bath towel. Behind it he tried to hide his shame.

But Simone was proud. He had always misjudged her, had always said derisively : " You can't tell by looking at this Simone that she is the daughter of Pierre Planchard." You couldn't tell by looking at her that she was anything but the poor niece and the little maid at the Villa Monrepos. The General de Baudricourt made horrid jokes about her and wanted to turn her over to his soldiers. But now the Mandator had picked her of all people, and now no one dared

even to think of anything indecent that he would like to do to her.

She set out for the headquarters. The Dauphin had his headquarters in Chinon—that she knew from her books. She knew the road well; it went through Saulieu and Autun. But she saw at once that progress on the clogged roads was hopeless.

She clenched her teeth, she used her elbows, she must go ahead, she had her commission to do. But the fugitives didn't let her through; they were all against her. One especially blocked her road, stiffly and stubbornly—a boy of about fourteen. She handed him the package of Roblechon cheese that she had taken with her for her lunch. But he only gave her an angry look.

She must tell the fugitives that she belonged to them; she must speak of her commission, she must show them her letter. "I have come for the consolation of the poor people"—that was what the Maid said, that was in her book. She must prevail upon the refugees to let her through.

But she couldn't speak; she seemed to have a gag in her mouth. Nor could she raise her head, or show them the letter. And those round about her were so dumb and motionless. That was almost worse than her own muteness. The entire procession of refugees stood still as if in a painting: the motors did not hum, the people did not speak, the horses did not neigh. It was unbearable; this silence, this deadness in her and about her; it cramped her heart. Where could she get the strength to overcome such resistance?

She clung to her letter. She thought of the Mandator. She summoned up her strength and lifted her foot. And behold, now she could advance it, now she could walk. She even got ahead quickly, the road cleared, the crowds divided whenever she stepped.

She had arrived; she was in Chinon.

But in her present state, perspiring and in the light green striped dress she could not possibly go to the Dauphin. First she had to have a good wash and then she had to buy

like to do a respectable suit of armour and order a flag. The flag was to cost twenty-five livres. How much was that in current money? It was hard to figure it out, surely several thousand francs; but in such an important matter you must not grudge the cost.

She was a little afraid of going into the hotel alone, but she summoned up her courage and at the reception desk she said in a perfectly natural manner: "A room, and everything is to be at the expense of the government: I am travelling on official business," and she showed her letter. The reception clerk was the one who was at the Hotel Bristol in Paris at the time when she lived there with Uncle Prosper. When he saw the letter he became very deferential. The proprietor rushed up; it was Monsieur Berthier of the Hotel de la Poste. He made a bow, the sort with which he welcomed the richest Englishmen, and led her at once to the Napoleon room. The chambermaid immediately turned back the bed; it was the one in which Napoleon once slept, but of course it had fresh linen on it. And then, exhausted by her long journey, she lay down for half an hour and closed her eyes; and the alarm clock ticked and the crickets chirped. Then Messieurs L'Agréable et L'Utile came in to measure her for armour. Monsieur L'Agréable measured all round her. "Chest 34," he said, "Hips 32," he said, and Monsieur L'Utile diligently wrote it down. At the same time he chattered interminably: "Mademoiselle shall have a first-rate suit of armour. All made to order. It'll be hard to do with all the iron we must use but we know what we owe to Pierre Planchard's daughter."

Monsieur L'Agréable occasionally squeezed her and touched her a little bit too much while he measured her, but she only had to look at him; then he hummed innocently to himself and pretended that it was someone else. And then they started hammering the armour on her to make it fit well. It was a noisy business, and it was fatiguing to stand up so long; moreover she was still tired from the many errands

that she had had to do for Madame. But finally everything was finished.

She stood in front of the mirror. Now she needed only the helmet and the flag. And here was the flag; and it was Henriette who brought it.

This was really nice of Henriette. Henriette was vindictive, and Simone was always afraid that she had not forgotten the licking that Simone had given her when she insulted her father. But now it was plain that she was a good friend after all and that she came when you needed her. There she stood and smiled and waved the big banner and she looked exactly as she did in her coffin, very pretty and waxlike.

And then Simone tried on the helmet; it was more like a three-cornered, cap such as the soldiers wear. Henriette gave her the banner and smiled at her in the mirror.

And then Simone stood at the foot of the steps to the Headquarters. They were the steps of the Elysée and President Lebrum lived upstairs. In Paris she often passed here; her Hotel Bristol was close by.

Sentries stopped her and asked for her identification papers. She showed her letter and the sentries presented arms and said: "Go right up, mademoiselle. You are expected. This is a great day for France." And they looked at her reverently.

Simone went up the steps. At first it was quite easy; but the steps were endless, and now they were no longer the steps of the Elysée but those of the steeple of Notre Dame. They wound and they wound and she asked the people coming down: "How many more steps are there?" and the people replied, "Three hundred and forty-two, mademoiselle. You really ought to know that." And she went on climbing and when she had climbed another fifty steps she asked: "How many more steps are there?" And again they answered reproachfully: "Three hundred and forty-two." And again and again, no matter how high she climbed, there were still always three hundred and forty-two steps.

She stopped, she had to catch her breath, her back hurt,

everything she had a pain in her side. She was very much afraid that she would not reach the top.

ded only / Again she went on, but the armour was too heavy and the
and it wa flag pressed her shoulder ; it would have been much wiser to
have ordered a cheaper, smaller flag ; and she simply could
vindictive not carry the basket with the letter any longer. When she
gotten the looked through the little windows she saw below the nut-
sulted he brown roofs of Saint-Martin, and squatting on them the
riend afte gargoyles and monsters of Notre Dame, and they always
There sh remained at the same height no matter how high she climbed ;
she looked they just would not sink lower. She would never arrive in
xlike. time. And when the Dauphin asked her : "Why are you so
more like late ?" she would not be able to answer. Yet she had
Henriette started at once when she received the letter.

r. But there stood the Dauphin. She recognized him by his
ps to th black and silver uniform ; it was the one that the deputy
e and Pre prefect wore on festive occasions.

en passed "Now just sit down for a while and get your breath, my
ntification dear little girl," said the Dauphin. He had a high, hollow
presented voice, he looked a little absent-minded, but he had a friendly
You an manner and did not inspire fear. "Nice of you," he con-
And they tinued, "to come at once when we sent for you. Did you get
my letter all right ? I was afraid it might get lost ; the
conditions in the country are so bad now, in the Postal
Administration too. We need you very badly, mademoiselle."

easy ; but She talked with him as with an equal. "You knew my
onger the father, gracious Dauphin, didn't you ?" she asked trustingly.
tre Dame And : "Of course," replied the Dauphin. "I used him a
he peopl great deal, he rendered me important services. But then,
" and the when I sent him to the Congo, he didn't come back. It was
demoiselle very mysterious. My police have been unable to find out
a climbing anything. I fear they are corrupt too. Between you and
he asked me, I believe the Two Hundred Families, the gentlemen of
gain they by Banque de France, and my big industrialists and the
rty-two." nobility had him poisoned because the results of his investi-
bed, then gations displeased them. I am always having trouble with
s. the Two Hundred Families, especially with Family Number
back hurt

97. All they can think of is poison and concentration camps ; all they can think of its fire and sword against the poor people. It is not my fault. I should so much like to earn the surname, 'the Well-beloved.' If it goes on like this, however, I shall always have to remain simply Charles the Seventh."

Simone looked at him kindly, almost sympathetically. Monsieur Xavier had told her the truth : the Dauphin was decent at heart, only he was undecided and weak, and could not carry out his good intentions.

She was just about to say something comforting and encouraging to him when the telephone rang. Annoyance on his tired, sad face with the surprised eyebrows, the Dauphin lifted the receiver and began a conversation. It was endless, and he spoke in a strange language. At first Simone believed it to be in Latin, but then it seemed to be either English or German. She was very anxious to know with whom he was speaking. It was probably one of the gentlemen of the big monopolies. They had many ears ; they knew everything. Very likely they had got wind of this audience and would have liked to sabotage it. Now she was almost sure that she heard the creaking voice of the Chatelain in the telephone, the wicked General La Trémouille who would have liked to overthrow her so that his wines would reach Bayonne safely. She listened hard. But then the Dauphin interrupted his conversation, looked at her angrily and said : "Don't be impertinent," and she was ashamed of herself and blushed.

Finally he hung up the receiver, sighing, and turned to her again. And now it was up to her. Now Simone must fulfil her commission and get his consent to a fight to the finish against the Two Hundred Families ; and in this fight there would be only victory or death.

She stood there and considered the best way of persuading the weak, evasive Dauphin to make a clear-cut decision. But while she stood there and thought, she saw to her dismay that he had obviously forgotten her presence. He had seated himself and begun to eat his crêpes suzettes. She

centration came closer to him to remind him that she was there. Then, all at once she recognized his right ear, pointed at the top and strangely thickened, and a great terror seized her.

But she must not lose heart so quickly. She thought of her great mission and made a start. "Gracious Dauphin," she declared resolutely, "things can't go on as they have in the past. You must tackle your Two Hundred Families quite differently. The way you do things you'll never get anywhere with them. They are clever devils, real crooks. There's no question that they would prefer a Hitler, who promises them a 60-hour week, to a king of France who promises his people a chicken in every pot and a 40-hour week. There's no sense in making nice Latin speeches about liberty to those folk. You'll have to give them a good trouncing. You'll simply have to forbid the export of English capital, and the Comité des Forges must not sell its steel to the Boches any longer. That's the very least I demand of you. Yes, indeed, that's the way it is; don't look so surprised. I have come for the consolation of the poor people. You mustn't plunder only the poor people all the time, gracious Dauphin. You must also exploit the rich for a change. You'll have to smoke them out. Everybody at the garage says that, especially the driver Maurice, and he knows the exact figures. If you don't do that you'll be betrayed in the end, just as we were."

The Dauphin was displeased. "This isn't my affair," he said. "I'm not interested in matters of economy; that's what the experts are for. I am the king and I have to act the part. Shoemaker, stick to your last. I speak many languages. Didn't you hear me telephone in Latin a little while ago? But if I tried to teach my gentlemen of the Banque de France their business, that would be impertinent. No, no, you take your request to the driver Maurice, of whom you seem to think so much. Here you're barking up the wrong tree," he concluded sulkily.

Simone reproached herself. She had not intended to offend the Dauphin. He meant well, only he was so cautious

because he was dependent upon Madame. He was good to look at as he sat there with his thick reddish-blond hair, his fine blue-grey eyes and the bushy brows. And he had always been especially kind to her, the Dauphin. How much attention he showed her during their stay together in Paris!

Now he seemed to regret that he had answered her so indignantly. "You know, little one," he resumed, speaking familiarly with her as with an adult, "that business of the Two Hundred Families is not as simple as your Maurice thinks. They are full of fight, especially Family Number 97, and if I am too strict with them they'll make use of their international connections and the first thing you know, I'll lose my royal salary."

But by now Simone had overcome her attack of unwarranted sympathy. She seized her banner more firmly—it was now the red flag of Jaurès—she planted herself resolutely in front of the Dauphin, and with a very definite tone in her fine, deep voice she advised him: "Give it to them straight, gracious Dauphin. If you just give your wretched Two Hundred Families what's coming to them, you'll see how fast they'll come to heel. After all, these gentlemen are not only business men, but also Frenchmen."

This argument, however, was of no avail with the Dauphin. "Frenchmen," he repeated with weary irony, "Frenchmen. France. What is France? There are as many Frances as there are classes. My peasants and my workers and my Two Hundred Families, they all speak to me of France all the time, and each one means something different. This much I know: my Two Hundred, when they say France, mean higher profit and lower taxes."

Simone stood in front of the Dauphin, filled with fervour and ardour. To overcome this slackness, this despondency, that was her duty. She must transform this old Swank-pot into King Charles the Seventh of France. That is why the Mandator had sent her the letter. "No," she cried. "You must not say such things. You must not even think such things. France is not an empty word, you know that very

was good well." She pointed at her flag and enunciated in a clear voice: "Our fatherland, France, grew out of centuries of common suffering and common longing. To be sure there is class war, and sharp social contrasts, but that does not change the concept of the fatherland."

These words made a visible impression on the Dauphin. He walked up and down with brisk, manly steps, so that the crimson robe over the black and silver uniform streamed behind him. "You are very eloquent, Joan," he said and looked at her approvingly.

Simone blushed; he seemed to believe the sentences were her own. She must not permit that; she must not strut in borrowed finery. "But that's not mine," she said earnestly. "That's by Jaurès."

"But the effect comes from your beautiful voice," answered the Dauphin and patted her in a friendly manner. And: "You're going to the front," he announced magnificently and fondled her once more.

Simone was embarrassed when the Dauphin patted her. But her embarrassment changed to satisfaction. So it made no difference that she was skinny as a whippet. She had succeeded in getting this difficult man to make up his mind.

Then she was at the front.

All the generals that she had read about in books were there, the constables, the marshals, the admirals. Negotiating with them was easier than she had expected. She talked simply, according to her lights, and no one minded that she didn't know the rules of etiquette that were customary among these gentlemen of great names and titles.

It was much more difficult to prevail upon them actually to wage war. Simone knew exactly what was to be done and she stated it clearly, and the generals said yes. And when nothing happened. Everything was done differently; they said they didn't understand her; she talked herself hoarse, and they simply would not understand her. She sensed that they all opposed her. Probably many of the generals had been bought by the Two Hundred Families

and would rather have the Nazis win. She knew it, but how could she prove it?

Moreover she saw with her own eyes how some of the gentlemen were constantly trafficking with the lawyers. The attorneys came in, clad in their black robes and caps and white neck-frills; and there was Maître Levantour too, who with his trickery, was the cause of her father's downfall. He behaved with great importance now, also. Fat, oily, well-dressed, he went from one general to another. In front of his fat stomach hung the copper plate with the inscription "Charles-Marie Levantour, Attorney and Notary," so that everybody should know who he was, and in the second place because it saved him the cost of a suit of armour. Simone asked him sternly: "What do you want here, monsieur?" He replied, however: "But, mademoiselle, the Duke de Trémoille, the Field-Marshal, has personally deigned to see for me," and he showed her his large universal passport.

The Duke de la Trémoille smiled with malicious friendliness. Of course, she knew all the time that he was really the Marquis. She whispered it to the Dauphin and told him that this fascist was doing business with the gentlemen of the steel monopoly across the Rhine, and that he let the English sign over the best vineyards to him as a bribe. But "What do you expect me to do, mademoiselle?" asked the Dauphin. "If I were to eliminate everyone who is crooked . . ." and he shrugged his shoulders eloquently.

Simone looked for the faces of her new friends. She knew them well; she knew from her books who were her true friends. But one was missing, the one whom she was most eager to see; Gilles de Rais, the great, infamous, pampered sensualist, with his choir boys and actors and many women and books. He simply wasn't there and Simone hesitated to ask the others about him.

She asked Henriette. She had always asked Henriette about great secrets: how it was about men, and how you deceived children, and Henriette always whispered and always kept the answers. She knew this time too. "He is here

new it, by headquarters," she whispered. "He is very curious about you; he'll be here presently."

Then he came in; you could recognize him by his blue moustache. He strolled over from the garage with a rolling stride. He probably came from the shower-bath; he took very good care of himself and certainly took seven or eight showers a day, and he smelt like Monsieur Armand's barber shop. But really he smelt more like leather. That was because he was wearing a leather jacket.

The sight of this jacket was a blow to Simone. Of course she guessed that it was the driver, Maurice and that in a moment he would make one of his horrid remarks.

He stopped in front of her. He rested his hand brazenly on his hip, looked her up and down, and said: "Well, young lady, how's everything? How about a little moonlight stroll? But, of course, mademoiselle won't go out with the likes of me. She belongs to the other crowd, to the Villa Monrepos."

Now she ought to tell him plainly that she had come for the consolation of the poor people. But she couldn't do it. She wasn't a bit afraid of the great generals. But in front of this man she couldn't open her mouth. She stood there in great distress and everybody waited to hear her answer, and Gilles de Rais stood impudently in front of her with his heavy face, his hand on his hip, and the generals smiled at her embarrassment. If she didn't say something quickly she could say good-bye to her authority for ever.

At this moment Etienne took a hand. Without ado, with more courage than she had expected of him, he stepped up to Gilles de Rais and said to him: "What do you want of this lady, monsieur? Have you ever been introduced to her?" He looked terribly young beside the huge Gilles de Rais; after all he was only a little boy of sixteen, very thin, although very tall, and Gilles de Rais would probably not put up with his conduct.

But no, Gilles de Rais wasn't thinking of starting a row. He laughed, put his arm around Etienne's shoulder, and said

genially : "But, my dear friend, doesn't she belong to the Villa Monrepos? You belong to the place at which you sleep. And where does she sleep?"

And then they all went to sleep. Simone slept in the same tent with several generals; that was customary at the front. She was glad that she was wearing her green slacks, in spite of Madame who thought that that was improper in wartime. But if she had had a skirt during the night, in the tent with all these men, that would have been highly embarrassing.

Simone was very tired. There had been so much work to-day, the errands for Madame, the discussions with the Dauphin, the work in the garden, and the Council of War. She was afraid she might snore and that might create unfavourable comment. She noticed that the generals did not snore. That was natural; as gentlemen they had learned not to snore. However, they constantly tossed from one side to the other because it was uncomfortable sleeping in full armour, and their armour jangled, and through the jangling her snoring probably could not be heard anyhow.

She felt that she would have to go outside. That was embarrassing; the generals would probably all look at her, just as the men did when you went to the ladies' room in the Cafés Napoleon. She wished she could at least take Henriette with her; it was always better when two went out together, but unfortunately Henriette was not there. So she sneaked out alone, softly and inconspicuously through the ranks of the sleepers; but she could not keep her armour from clanking. At once they all woke up, and Gilles de Rais twisted his blue moustache and smiled. But luckily Etienne was there again. And he said to her : "Don't be scared, Simone. If he makes any remark, I'll beat him to a pulp."

Simone stretched. The crickets chirped and the alarm clock ticked. Simone rolled over on the other side.

At last it was daylight and there was a battle and Simone was in the midst of it with her banner. The tanks approached, lurching clumsily, all enemy tanks; there must be many thousands of them, and they were all built of French steel.

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The sky was black with enemy aeroplanes and they were all built of French aluminium. But Simone waved her flag and no matter how many enemy tanks came, the poor people of France did not yield, and if hundreds were crushed down, two hundred more arose, and Simone continued to wave her flag.

And then there was a council of war, a very great council of war. Uncle Prosper's private office was not large enough for it; the room grew and grew—it was the Deputy Prefecture, then Saint-Lazare church, then Notre Dame. The Dauphin presided, again in his black and silver uniform. Tall and lean, he sat there, slightly bent, looked at the assemblage with his pale, helpless eyes, and fingered his rosette. All the generals whom Simone knew were there, even Marshal Pétain, and, of course, not only the generals but also Monsicur Berthier of the Hotel de la Poste, and Messieurs Amiot and Laroche and Raimu and Peyroux; and Monsieur Grasset of the Café Napoleon went from one to the other, bowed, and asked after their health. Again there were countless lawyers in their black robes and caps and naturally, Maître Levautour was also present. They were constantly running in and out and showing scripts to each other, and talking importantly to the generals, and bringing their documents and cheques, and whispering.

The Dauphin opened the session with a speech in Latin. He reported that Mademoiselle Planchard, at her father's behest, wished the war to be waged energetically to an end without delay. He said many learned things and opened the subject for debate. At once the Duke de la Trémoille rose, and this time the Marquis was particularly unpleasant. "No one can admire your genius more than I, mademoiselle," he said in his creaking voice and struck his riding crop against his boots. "But the art of war is subject to laws that cannot be learned overnight, while our ancestors have laboriously studied them for centuries. It would be simple enough just to attack all the time. But even my great ancestor, before he defeated the enemy on the Catalanian fields, first wore

him down with a carefully and subtly planned policy of non-intervention. 'Make haste slowly' is the motto of all military experts. Isn't that your opinion, Field-Marshal? And he turned to Marshal Pétain. And the old general rose, and with his cracked, venerable voice he announced: "Yes, comrade. We are done for, we must surrender. That's what I said in the Hundred Years' War, that's what I said at Berdun, and that's what I say now. I'll pledge my military word of honour on that."

And immediately Maître Levautour rose and declared with feigned regret: "Mademoiselle has inherited her impetuosity from her father. And she is wearing her dark green slacks again too, in spite of the fact that Madame has expressly declared that slacks are improper in war. Simone simply has no respect for high traditions. It is her nature to be impertinent. Her late father too is dead and gone as a result of his impertinence."

And they all crowded around the Dauphin and they all whispered eagerly in his ear and the people from Saint-Martin, Messieurs Amiot and Laroche and Messieurs L'Utile and L'Agréable and all the others look with disapproval at Simone; but Uncle Prosper said distantly: "I am a business man and as such reserve my vote."

Simone felt isolated. She experienced again how enormously difficult it was to fulfil her mission and to protect the poor people against the powerful union of the Two Hundred Families and the two million small investors. Constantly they crawled around the Dauphin and whispered in his ear, from the right side and from the left and from above and below. And his face grew continually more tired and his eyes paler and paler and his eyebrows higher and higher, and then he turned to her and said: "I hear we have no more money to continue the war. If we continue to fight I would have to order new taxes, and of course the poor people would have to pay them. The Two Hundred Families tell me that they are bled white and cannot possibly pay more." And: "Entirely impossible, out of the question," protested

policy of the Duke de la Trémoille and the notary Levautour and all otto of all the Two Hundred Families, but loudest of all Family Number Marshal? 97. And the two million small investors screamed bloody murder and threw four million defending hands up into the air. And Marshal Pétain stood there, old as the hills and awe-inspiring and : "Always surrender," he said.

"There you see," said the grieved Dauphin to Simone, playing with the rosette of the Legion of Honour. "France doesn't want to fight. France wants to end the war."

But here Gilles de Rais stepped in. He put his hand on his hip and declared : "France, gracious Dauphin? What you see here is not France. The France of these gentlemen is not ours," and his voice sounded especially clear and squeaky. And Père Bastide stepped forward ; small and sprightly he walked up and down, his valiant head with his ruddy face and the shimmering white hair held high, and quoted lines from Victor Hugo and the sentences of Jean Jaurès. Yet they all only smiled with pity and shook their heads and said : "Poor fellow, he is getting senile."

Simone was enraged. She knew that Père Bastide was right in spite of the fact that he was old and maybe a little foolish and she knit her brow and frowned at the Dauphin and said : "You should be ashamed of yourself, gracious Dauphin. You certainly know that France is different from what these people are talking about," and she made a scornful gesture at the Two Hundred Families and the small investors. "The Two Hundred Families are the ones who have bled the country. They catch the farmers and if they cannot pay the mortgage, they hang them on the elm tree until the wolves come. And you should certainly not listen at all to this poisonous notary Levautour." But now Maître Levautour got very excited and pushed forward and many other lawyers with him. All at once the whole cathedral of Notre Dame was full of them ; their black robes fluttered, one saw nothing but their black robes and white frills, and Simone became fearfully aware that many of them had heads like birds and if one looked closely they

were the gargoyles on the roof of Notre Dame, all dressed up in robes and caps.

Maitre Levantour pulled out a large paper from under his copper shield and announced in a croaking, birdlike voice: "This is a peace offer from the enemy. It has just arrived. It is very favourable. It would be a crime to refuse this offer and to continue the war. France wants peace," he screamed with his croaking bird's voice, and all the monsters from Notre Dame fluttered with their black robes and croaked in unison: "France wants peace." And the Dauphin looked very tired and very yielding and he shrugged his shoulders regretfully and Simone felt that in a moment he would say: "All right, let's make peace."

But now Simone gripped her flag and planted her feet firmly and shouted: "France wants peace?" and she felt that the whole cathedral resounded with the furious contempt in her voice. And she faced the lawyers and the Two Hundred Families and the two million small investors and she burst out: "France? What do you know about France?" And all at once she could express what she had never been able to put into words before. All at once she knew exactly what France was and she could say it. The lawyers looked at her fearfully with their birds' faces and the Two Hundred Families looked at her with their sharp, gigantic beaks, and the Two Hundred Families rattled their swords against their golden armour, and the small investors raised a shrill, wailing howl that penetrated to the very marrow, and behind them appeared Uncle Prosper with a frightened, imploring face, and further back the fat masklike face of Madame stared horribly. Yet Simone did not fear anyone or anything; she did not even fear to hurt Uncle Prosper. She had been given the mission to give strength to the Dauphin so that he would not weaken and make a tragic peace, and she knew now what she must say, she knew now what France was.

She started to speak. She was not prepared, she did not know what she would say next; at times she did not even know in what language she was speaking. But she knew

dressed up that now the words came easily, that it was now given to her to speak with the gift of tongues.

She spoke of the Two Hundred Families. Here was this noble vineyard, France, and then there was the vermin; and they moved into this lovely vineyard, and they had ravaged it, and they had attracted all the rest of the vermin in the world. "Do not tolerate it," Simone shouted. "Smoke them out. And if there is no other way, then tear out the infected vines, root and branch, and burn them, and save our beautiful vineyard, France. Do not spare the axe, do not spare the fire."

Simone spoke with dark and ardent fervour, and all fell silent; and Mademoiselle Rousseil, her teacher, was there; at first she shook her head violently, but then she became quiet and listened with enthusiasm. And the foes became smaller and smaller; Madame's bulky face disappeared, and the two million investors dropped their hands, and the golden armour of the Two Hundred Families faded, and the lawyers drew in their black robe-wings and silently sneaked back to the roof of the cathedral. Simone saw more and more exalted faces about her. All her friends were suddenly present; Etienne looked up to her admiringly, and Père Bastide's ruddy, wrinkled face shone with joy, and Gilles de Rais twirled his moustache and said in his high, squeaky voice: "Oh, la la, she really did give it to them. Now their goose is cooked. Now you can tell that she is Pierre Planchard's daughter."

And the Dauphin had his crimson coat on again, and his face was very manly and his eyes were grey-blue and they gleamed under his bushy, reddish-blond brows, and with ringing voice he proclaimed: "You have convinced me, my dear Simone. Of course I'll give you the money and the troops. And I don't care what Madame says."

And then the advance began, and Simone was in the very first tank. But before her floated a great, bright figure; it flew ahead impetuously, its dress billowing with the speed of flight. And Simone saw that it was her goddess, her Winged

Goddess of Victory. But this time she would not let her escape; now she had the opportunity to see her head and to find out who she was. Simone trembled with impatience. She forced her tank to its highest speed, but the clumsy vehicle rocked and lurched and could not catch up with the flying figure. Sometimes Simone almost reached her, but the goddess had only slowed her flight for a while to accelerate it more than ever. It was plain—the winged creature was teasing Simone. But now at last she turned her head in flight, she smiled at Simone, almost sportively, and—Simone had known it all the time—it was the pale, delicate head of Henriette.

A great bliss filled Simone, a happiness that almost broke her heart. She felt light as a bird; she felt—victory; she felt—France; she felt—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

And then she was sitting in a cinema, watching the news-reel. She watched a serpentine arrow on the screen that marked her advance from one town to another; she watched children exultant with joy because they were to have a school holiday on account of her victory; she watched all the world putting little flags on maps to mark the places she had taken, and they had to move the flags so quickly that they could not keep up with her. But Simone sat in the very last row of the cinema and saw all that, and hid, hot with joy.

And then the alarm clock ticked more and more loudly and finally grew into a tremendous tolling of bells. That was because the Dauphin was being crowned in the Cathedral at Rheims. The cathedral was badly riddled by shell-fire and the sun shone through the roof, and everyone perspired in his Sunday clothes. But that made no difference. The bells rang, the aeroplanes flew through the blue, the cricket chirped, the band played the Marseillaise, and all joined in singing.

But Simone stood there in her armour and her dark green slacks, and waved her banner. Now it was clear that it was a good idea to pay the twenty-five livres and not grudge the money.

She looked around for her acquaintances. Sure enough, there came Gilles de Rais, and he planted his fist on his hip and said: "You belong to us, mademoiselle. I have misjudged you. Pardon me."

She was very curious as to whether Uncle Prosper was here. Madame will certainly have forbidden him to attend. But there he was. He had a proud, sly, embarrassed look on his face, and he came closer, and stealthily planted a cheerful slap on her dark green slacks. She was a little confused, but very glad that he came.

He beamed at her with his radiant, grey eyes amid the many little wrinkles, and with a sweet shock she saw that it was not Uncle Prosper at all, but her father. Pierre Plancheard. And her father said: "You did very well, baby.

I am satisfied with you. You are really my daughter." And she was unbelievably happy, happier than a human dared to be.

PART TWO

ACTION

I

THE INCIDENT AT THE BRIDGE

The SIMONE sat on a stool in the kitchen, a little bent over, her thin, strong arms in her lap. As usual she had taken her midday meal in the kitchen with Madame; then Madame had retired while Simone washed the dishes. Now she was finished and, for the first time in many days, had nothing to do. She did not need to go to town as on other afternoons; there was nothing to order, nothing to fetch. The coming hours belonged to her.

It was an unaccustomed sensation. With an empty, slightly astonished look on her face she sat and stared absently into the garden, which lay well tended and pretty in the glare of the noonday sun.

Then sharply and suddenly came a realization of this strange condition. There she sat idly; about her was the quiet, well-ordered house, before her lay the beautiful, peaceful garden, every shrub cared for, every rose protected, while all France round about was shattered and bruised.

So she sat for quite a while. She could not grasp this novel situation of being unhurried, of having no task that had to be finished in a brief space. Finally she rose and stretched, and went up to her room.

Up here it was stifling in the early afternoon. She sat down on the edge of her bed. In front of her, on the chest, lay her books, the three which Père Bastide had given her on top. Should she read? She stretched out her hand but then hesitantly withdrew it.

She was almost dissatisfied that there were no errands to be done in town to-day. To sit here and wait was unbearable, while the country was teeming with wild, great happenings. In the city one was so much closer to everything. The things one saw and heard there were painful, but it was worse not to see and hear anything.

Madame apparently considered it self-evident that she would stay at home to-day. But suppose she went over to the town after all? Suppose she tried to make a few purchases on her own? They were almost out of pepper, and a few tins of condensed milk would be useful too. Perhaps she might find something at the Café Napoleon, or at Beaumont's. So she decided to go to the town.

Having decided to act on her own initiative, she became bolder. Madame regarded the wearing of slacks in these times as improper. But who would pay any attention to that now, in the midst of this general dissolution? And besides, slacks were much more convenient; you could get

through the crowds more easily, you felt safer. Simone took the slacks from the cupboard.

These dark green slacks were a gift from Uncle Prosper; he had brought them for her on a trip to Cannes. The slacks had been too large for her; she had had to grow into them. From the beginning Madame looked at them with displeasure, but since they were a gift from her son, she was reluctant to interfere. Simone had worn them only a few times, for when the war broke out Madame had a welcome pretext for prohibiting the wearing of the slacks.

To-day, however, without regard to Madame's wishes, Simone took out the dark green slacks and put them on. Then she picked up her large wicker basket and went to town.

She went through the narrow, winding, hilly lanes. Every stone of the old mellow houses was familiar to her; even the fugitives who wandered through the streets in busy idleness were no longer a novelty; and yet the town seemed somehow changed to-day. Most of the former inhabitants were no longer there. They had left the place to which they belonged as did the stones and the gay facades and the sloping, nut-brown roofs. Simone had been accustomed to an exchange of greetings with them, to a few casual words. These words generally had meant little or nothing, but to-day Simone felt the pain of not being able to give and to receive these meaningless phrases.

Suddenly there was a rumour which drove those that had remained in the town out of their houses; for it now appeared that there were still some of them.

The news which drove them out into the streets was the tidings of the horrible incident at the bridge across the Cerein River.

The road across this bridge was the only one which led to Highways 7 and 77. For hours the crowds had stood before the bridge and on it, closely jammed, hopelessly entangled. They were always full of fear that German flyers might dive down upon them here, but those who had declared that there was no danger here had, so far, always been right. The

district was strategically unimportant, military action was not to be expected, and the cities had not yet been bombed. Notwithstanding that, German aeroplanes had now been over and had shot at the fugitives on the bridge. The result had been fearful. No one knew how many were dead; it was only known that there were many. And the wounded were in a bitter plight. The ambulances proceeded very slowly on the crowded roads, the hospitals were hopelessly overfilled, the wounded had to be transported as far as the region of Nevers.

The inhabitants of the town who had decided to remain were thrown into a new panic by the news that the war had come so close to them. There was general talk of blowing up the bridge across the Cerein River. If that were done the city would be definitely cut off from the southbound roads and the people would be trapped. Many had weighed the arguments for and against flight a hundred times and had finally decided to remain. Now they weighed them again. Wouldn't it be wiser after all to leave, like Messieurs Amiot and Laroche and many others? The choice remained open for only another day, perhaps only for a matter of hours. They asked themselves, they asked the others, everyone asked everyone else, they even asked Simone.

In her mind there was no doubt. If they fled they only stopped up the highways and hindered the troops. They would have to stay. So far there was still hope that the Boches could be kept away from Saint-Martin, and, if not, the people of Saint-Martin could be more useful here than anywhere in the south.

Simone perceived that the incident at the bridge affected the refugees in a different manner than it did the inhabitants. In past days the fugitives had had only one wish, to get on, the farther the better, in the direction of safety. Gradually, however, this wish was strangled in grim resignation. The incident at the bridge confirmed the embittered indifference of the refugees. It was senseless to crawl farther, it was immaterial where they awaited the Germans; danger was

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everywhere. The incident at the bridge only proved anew that they were in greater danger on the road than here in Saint-Martin. To be sure there was nothing to eat, to be sure all necessities of life was lacking, but still they decided to remain. Indeed, having passed two or even three nights here, they had almost come to love the miserable little spot which stood at their disposal. They were familiar with the straw bedding in the corridor of the Hall of Justice or with the little corner of the Place du Général Gramont. They did not want to go farther.

They sat in front of the cafés, the refugees, under the red and orange awnings, in the sultry heat. They drank their brandy or wine; they dozed or talked wearily, always of the same things.

Simone walked with her basket across the platform of the Café Napoleon. The tall girl with the wilful, tanned face did not look unattractive in the dark green slacks, and the men looked at her. She squeezed through between the tables and listened to what was being said.

At one of the tables they were arguing as to when the Germans would come. No one knew anything about it but everyone held wearily and tenaciously to his own opinion. One of them declared they could not possibly arrive here in less than four days; they had more important things to do than to occupy this strategically unimportant region. Another maintained that they were unbelievably fast and thorough, and if they advanced along roads 7 and 77, they would certainly also occupy this eastern portion. A third, an elderly man, said that it was entirely out of the question for the Germans to come here at all; not only the Maginot Line but also our positions on the western Loire were completely impregnable and the Germans could certainly not scatter their troops by sending some of them here. The others remained silent and contented themselves with making incredulous faces. But one of them said: "If only they were here now, so that this miserable waiting and wondering would stop."

Meanwhile new rumours about the incident at the bridge were constantly circulating. Everyone contradicted the other. Numbers were quoted. There were 214 dead, one man reported, and they had counted 76 ambulances. Another man, with a very virile face, asserted that there had been 168 dead and 98 ambulances. The first clung to his figures, the second, morose and angry, to his; they were actually on the point of fighting about it.

Simone stood and listened quietly but intensely.

Across the pavement came a young fellow, tall and lanky, with a long broad-browed pointed face. Simone's heart leapt; Etienne had come to town. He saw her at the same moment and pressed through between the tables towards her. Red with joy and a little awkwardly he took her hands in both of his and urgently asked her to sit down with him inside the café.

This was an unusual, an unheard-of invitation; but it was also unusual that she had gone away from home without telling Madame, and it was unheard of that she was loitering about on the pavement outside the Café Napoleon, alone and in dark green slacks. The times were to blame for it. She did not hesitate to accept Etienne's invitation.

The interior of the Café Napoleon was dusky, almost dark; it was empty and after the heat outside it was pleasantly cool. You could see the pavement with its red and orange awning and beyond it the square, basking in the glare of the sun, and you could hear the subdued noise of the pavement and the square. The two young people sat at the little marble-topped table, each with a glass of cider. They were good friends, they understood each other, and dusk and coolness stood about them like a protecting wall.

Even in peaceful times the face of the sixteen-year-old Etienne was thoughtful. To-day he looked troubled and he found it hard to speak as precisely and sedately as usual.

He had come over from Chatillon after much hesitation because he did not want to leave his parents alone. His parents had no idea what to do. At one moment they

thought they should leave at all costs; the next moment they were just as sure that they should stay; and when father was in favour of remaining, mother argued for leaving. They packed; they found they had packed the wrong things; they repacked; they decided to remain; they unpacked again.

It was unbearable, he said, and moved his head closer to hers. "I myself, just between you and me, I have hesitated a long time what to do," he confessed. "I have more reason to run away than the others. They all say that the Boches are thorough, and carefully investigate whether civilians of military age are not actually soldiers who have exchanged their uniforms for civilian clothes. They lock up countless civilians who appear suspicious to them, and when they once have you, they will scarcely ever let you go. I look older than I am," he continued with a mixture of pride and dejection. "I don't want to be caught by the Boches. I don't feel very safe here."

He looked straight at Simone and something like a smile ran over his face. "Now I know what I will do," he said with sudden decision. "It is strange; since we have sat here together I know it. I will not be driven by panic. I will stay. Perhaps something can still be done when the Boches come."

Simone's heart grew warm at his words. There they sat together and spoke together like people who made their own decisions and who had to find their own way. She looked kindly at him with her large dark eyes and: "Of course you must stay," she said eagerly, "and certainly you will be able to do something here. But it has not come to that by a long shot," she continued almost furiously; she had to make an effort to lower her ringing voice. "There is still the Maginot Line, and our positions on the western Loire are impregnable. At the Marne, in the last war, we were in a much worse fix before the great victory came." She spoke forcefully and with conviction.

Etienne looked at her with friendship and respect. For

quite a while they said nothing. From outside came the subdued noise of the talking of the refugees and the clinking of glasses. Someone had turned on the radio and again and again came the two bars of the Marseillaise: "*Aux armes, citoyens.*"

"I dreamed about Henriette last night," Simone suddenly began. She did not wish to say it but she couldn't help it. He, Etienne, and Henriette had always played together in the Parc des Capucins when they were children; they had had innumerable secrets together; these three had been an inseparable group among the others. Henriette had teased her awkward brother, she had mocked him in the presence of Simone; he had put up with it and had looked up to her as to a creature from a more delicate and more alert world. He and Simone had again and again exchanged thoughts of love and admiration about this strange creature Henriette. Since her death, however, as though by agreement, they had avoided talking about her.

Now Simone unexpectedly said: "Last night I dreamed about Henriette." Etienne looked up and glanced at her attentively. "I rarely think of her," Simone continued, "but sometimes I dream about her. Just imagine, last night I dreamt that Henriette was Joan of Arc."

Etienne drank his cider. "Strange," he said. She waited for him to ask questions; she wanted him to, yet she dreaded it. But he did not pursue the subject. "Do you still have such a hard time at home?" he asked instead.

"Yes," she answered, "it is not always easy."

"You are a brave girl," said Etienne. "The true daughter of Pierre Planchard." She blushed.

They left. He accompanied her a short distance. They passed the Palais Noiret where the Deputy Prefecture was housed. A long line of refugees stood in front of the beautiful old portal; three policemen stood on guard.

Simone was not infected by the panic around her. But she wanted a confirmation of her faith. If anyone could have reliable information about the actual events, then it

would be her friend up here, the secretary of the Deputy Prefecture, Monsieur Xavier Bastide.

Monsieur Xavier had the ruddy face and alert, good-natured brown eyes of his father. It was Simone's opinion that he also had his stormy temperament, but he had noticed in his early youth how much misunderstanding and unpleasantness this temperament brought his father, and he had made every effort to curb his own impetuosity. He had succeeded. When he walked about in the Deputy Prefecture with sedate step, very well but inconspicuously dressed, always wearing sleeve protectors, and when he listened thoughtfully to the arguments of litigants, he did not look like a man who, in the depth of his character, was like his father. Simone particularly admired him on account of the strength with which he restrained his violent temper.

Monsieur Xavier had gone to school with Pierre Planchard and Charles-Marie Levautour. He fought against Levautour with the same fervour with which he had loved and honoured Pierre Planchard, and he was very fond of Simone.

Simone saw the long line of waiting refugees. She was well aware that Monsieur Xavier would be very busy; but she longed to hear his friendly, ironic voice and she hoped that he would have time for her even to-day.

She bade Etienne good-bye and succeeded in entering the Deputy Prefecture without difficulty.

Confusion reigned behind the fine peaceful facade of the old Palace. Although the portal was well guarded, the doors of the offices within were open; everyone had access to all the offices and the fugitives went from one official to another. The officials urged them to leave the city. There were no longer any provisions to be had, and they ought to try to get further south where the supplies were more plentiful. Moreover the roads were less crowded than before and the rumours that the Germans were already beyond the Yonne or even in Le Creusot were pure nonsense. The fugitives, however, were gloomy and suspicious. In order to get further they would have to cross the bridge over the Cerein

River, and the officials were powerless against the terror which the catastrophe at the bridge had caused. "You simply want to get rid of us," the people said. "It is all the same to you if we get killed at the bridge."

The deputy prefect, Monsieur Cordelier, walked about anxiously amid the crowd and confusion, absently trying to comfort the people. But they did not want his vague comfort; they wanted bread and lodging for the night, they wanted milk for the infants, medicine for the sick. Simone knew that the deputy prefect would have liked to help them, but she also knew that he could not and that he was just as helpless as the people themselves.

Simone was well aware that it was not Monsieur Cordelier but Monsieur Xavier who actually ran the business of the Deputy Prefecture. Unfortunately, however, Monsieur Xavier had very little authority; he had to content himself with carrying on a quiet, tenacious battle against the weakness of his superior, and it grieved him that he accomplished so little with so much effort.

Simone went into his office. He smiled at her but indicated by a gesture that he was busy. He was arguing with a police officer. He seemed a little astonished that she remained, but he apparently had no objection. Moreover, there were three other people in the office, obviously fugitives who were standing against the wall and listening. Simone joined them.

It appeared that the police officer with his men, traffic officials from Paris, were on the way south. The Paris officers were noted for their training and their ability. The officer had been ordered to assign men to particularly dangerous points in order to direct traffic. Monsieur Xavier wanted him to leave two officers at the Cerein bridge. If that were done, he argued, some of the refugees could be persuaded finally to leave Saint-Martin. The community was no longer in a position to supply the barest necessities. The fugitives simply had to leave but they were afraid of the bridge.

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The police officer was unwilling, however, to leave any of his men. He had only a small number at his disposal, and although he had considerable authority, his orders were to regulate traffic further in the south. Moreover, he feared that any men whom he left here would eventually fall into the hand of the Germans. In his elegant, rapid Parisian he muttered many objections, and he looked at his watch repeatedly; he was in a hurry.

Simone stood quietly in the corner beside the three fugitives. She listened silently and tensely as they did, and her eyes were glued to the face of each speaker in turn. She knew Monsieur Xavier's features thoroughly. She observed that the big birth-mark on the right side of his face was swollen and reddened, and knew that Monsieur Xavier was angry and that he was exerting every effort to remain calm. He wanted to save the lives of hundreds of miserable people; he wanted to spare his city, Saint-Martin, still greater misfortune. Yet he had to be shrewd and he dared not speak as he wished to the gentlemen from Paris. With strange insight, however, Simone also understood the Parisian motive. He had been sent out to restore order at certain danger spots further south. He wanted to perform his task as well as possible; he did not want to scatter his men up here in middle France. That was understandable. But Simone with her plastic imagination also realized what was going on in the heads of the refugees who stood next to her. She did not need to look at their faces to sense their grim resignation and their tenacious hopes. In spirit she was fighting Monsieur Xavier's battle to save hundreds or at least a few dozens of these refugees by skilful persuasion of this man from Paris.

Monsieur Xavier was making great efforts. The police officer gave indifferent answers, anxious only to leave quickly. The three fugitives and Simone with her basket stood against the wall and listened.

The deputy prefect came in. "Have you gentlemen not come to an agreement?" he asked sadly and politely. He

had some new information regarding the incident at the bridge. What had happened there, he said, must have been horrible beyond conception. "If any spot is in danger," Monsieur Xavier summarized emphatically, "it is the bridge over the Cerein River."

But the police officer was now obviously tired of the argument. "Why don't you apply to the Staff," he said coolly, "and get them to blow the bridge up?" Besides, he added, the first reports of such catastrophes were usually unreasonably exaggerated; and he put on his gloves.

Simone followed his every motion. Now he is about to go, she thought, but he must be stopped, he must be persuaded it all cost to leave some of his men here. "There was 214 dead," she said suddenly. In her mind's eye she saw the refugees who, under the red and orange awning on the platform of the café, were quarrelling over the number of dead; she plainly saw the man with the very virile face who had gloomily and angrily defended his figures. "There were 214 dead," she repeated. "Eighty-nine ambulances drove to Nevers and they had to leave most of the wounded." Inconspicuous and thin she stood against the wall, the big basket on her arm, but her fine, striking full voice rang out valiantly and decisively. She herself did not know why she spoke with so much assurance; the police office and the officials of the Deputy Prefecture probably knew the figures much better than the man at the café.

Everyone looked at Simone with astonishment. She stared straight ahead, as if it had not been she that had spoken. There was a brief silence. The gentleman from Paris was still busy with his gloves. Then, without looking at Monsieur Xavier or Simone—he probably thought she was one of the fugitives—impatiently as to an importunate petitioner, he said to Monsieur Cordelier with a sigh: "Very well, I will leave you two of my men," and he walked out, accompanied by Monsieur Cordelier.

Monsieur Xavier walked over to Simone with rapid tread and stood in front of her. Suddenly he looked very much

like his father. He put his hand on her head, looked at her with a broad smile, shook his head and said in a very kindly manner : "What the deuce has got into you, Simone ?"

Simone herself did not understand how she had dared to open her mouth in the presence of these gentlemen and to make such questionable statements with so much assurance. But her figures had not seemed questionable to her when she uttered them, and she had felt that she had had to speak even though it cost her life.

"And now we will see about moving the fugitives," said Monsieur Xavier. Simone prepared to leave. "You are a plucky girl," said Monsieur Xavier. "Your father would have been pleased with you."

II

MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS

THE time had come to return to the Villa Monrepos. But Simone could not bear the thought. She walked through the crooked, hilly streets ; she was numb and in a fog. It had cost her no effort to speak. She had spoken involuntarily and the effect had been immediate. She was happy but she was confused.

She was looking for someone with whom she would talk ; she was looking for Etienne. She did not want to go to his house for she could not have spoken in the presence of his parents. She walked through the streets, she passed the Café Napoleon ; he was not there.

For some time she roamed about the city. Then suddenly she set out for the Avenue du Parc, to the garage, to the Planchard Transport Company.

She walked rapidly, a little smile on her curved lips. To-day she need not stand at the red pump ; to-day she need not be "out soliciting" ; to-day there would be no red pump and no one would be sitting on the bench in the shade. To-day the

lorries were rolling out to move the refugees. An hour had passed since she left the Deputy Prefecture. Surely by this time the deputy prefect and Monsieur Xavier had sent word to Uncle Prosper and the lorries were probably on the way.

And she did not need to be afraid of Maurice to-day. She had done something to prove that she did not belong to the Villa Monrepos. To-day she had the right to laugh aloud if Maurice made one of his impudent remarks.

But he would not. He would probably not be there at all. He would, like Etienne, have heard that men of military age were in danger when the Boches came. And Maurice was not like Etienne; Maurice would not await the Boches. A man who continued to work in the hated Planchard firm simply to dodge being called up, such a man would make himself scarce under the present circumstances. He would run off; he would flee; he would take to his heels, as Madame put it.

Now she was at the office. "I wasn't able to get anything," she said and deposited her empty basket with the book-keeper Peyroux, trying to make him and herself believe that she had gone to town on her daily errands. "I am sure, mademoiselle, that you couldn't get anything," Monsieur Peyroux replied sadly and grimly; his rabbit face looked even unhappier than usual. "Everything is in dissolution," he complained. "I don't understand why Monsieur Planchard sits here and waits for the terrible things that are bound to come. Most of the employees are gone, even old Arsène. Just imagine, the garage yard without a concierge. But when I asked the boss whether he really intended to stay here he gave me an awful telling-off. Of course, I understand that he feels responsible for the firm." He moved his head closer to Simone and, although the office was quite empty, he whispered to her in confidence, "I'll tell you, mademoiselle, he is hard and brave like an old Roman, the boss. Think of it, Madame Mimerelles came here and implored him to go away with her. But he's staying at his job. A Roman."

Simone pictured the blonde, pretty, plump Madame Imierelles. It must have cost the gallant Uncle Prosper great self-restraint to let her go alone.

"And the bureaucrats," raged the book-keeper, "have the impudence to make more and more demands of him. Yesterday he gave them the two Peugeot's, to-day a Renault, but they want the whole establishment. There," and he pointed to a document on his desk. "Just ten minutes ago Monsieur ordelier sent me another rag. He claims that he has found the means of moving the greater part of the refugees and he insists that we deliver all our lorries and petrol to him. They are to make such a proposition to a man like Monsieur Lanchard. Old man Jeannot, the messenger, is sitting out in the yard waiting for an answer. He'll have to be patient, the messenger. I don't dare take this rag of paper to the boss now." And, whispering, he confided to Simone: "The hatelain is here again."

Simone looked silly with surprise. "Is it still about his mines?..." She did not complete the sentence.

But Monsieur Peyroux was not listening to her. He had a sudden notion. "Perhaps," he meditated aloud, "it will help him in his dealings with the Marquis if I show him the letter." Painstakingly he picked up the letter and went up to Uncle Prosper's private office.

Simone also left the office. She stood in the doorway. The yard lay white and empty in the glare of the sun. She looked over at the bench in the shade. There sat three men, the packer Georges, the driver Richard, who was really much too old and was only being kept on account of the shortage of men, and the wobbly old messenger Jeannot. Maurice was not sitting there.

It afforded her some satisfaction that this impudent fellow, who was constantly criticizing others, was a coward himself. At the same time, however, she was disappointed. To-day it would have been a secret triumph to hear his insolent remarks.

Suddenly, without knowing why, the feeling of elation

which she had experienced until now was gone. She would have liked to turn back. But there sat the three on the bench and looked at her and it would have appeared very foolish if she suddenly made an about-face. The men on the bench would think she had been looking for someone, probably Maurice. All at once she blushed, and with pretended nonchalance she walked diagonally across the yard to the petrol pump.

There she stood. The men looked mildly astonished but not really interested. It was fearfully hot and Simone felt empty and exhausted after all the excitement. All at once she was filled with fear at her own boldness, at the way she had again and again transgressed the rules of the Villa Monrepos. She had gone to town on her own responsibility. She had worn her dark green slacks contrary to Madame's specific orders. She had impertinently interfered in the affairs of the Deputy Prefecture. What would Madame say, what would Uncle say when they heard of it?

Customers came and asked for petrol, more customers than usual, very many. Evidently word had gone round that the bridge and the road were passable.

Someone strolled out of the gloomy interior of the garage. Simone's heart stood still: Maurice. He was still here, he had remained; she had done him an injustice.

Now he was with the others. He pretended that he had not noticed her before. "Oh, lala, Mademoiselle Planchard," he said in his high voice, put his hand on his hip and grinned at her. "Mademoiselle Planchard has put on her attractive slacks and is out soliciting again."

He sat down by the others, yawned, and smoked. "Here we sit and wait for the Boches," he said. "The others," and he scornfully indicated Simone with a little jerk of his head, "they at least know what they are waiting for. They are at least consistent, those ladies and gentlemen. They stick it out to the end. The refugees on the Place Gramont are starving to death because they can't be moved, and upstairs the Marquis and the proprietor are making a deal about the

transport of wine barrels. Business as usual. The world is on fire but they are not afraid. They use the fire to cook up their little deals."

Simone stood at the pump. There was a grain of truth in Maurice's words, with a lot of poison added. He twisted and exaggerated everything. Uncle Prosper would probably be happier if the world were not burning and if everything were going its orderly way as before. Uncle Prosper would probably prefer to forgo "cooking up his little deals," as Maurice called it and would probably prefer to be with his Madame Mimerelles instead. Uncle Prosper was good-natured and would certainly like to help the refugees. But he believed in his business, he was attached to his business; he had built it up. And that Maurice counted Simone among the people who profited by the general misfortune was both stupid and vicious.

The men on the bench were meanwhile poking fun at the boss. They had seen Madame Mimerelles coming and going and they put two and two together. Yes, indeed, they said, the rich had their problems too. Poor Monsieur Planchard had had to make up his mind whether he should go away with his lady love or remain here to keep up his profits and to guard his lorries. "When they face a choice between lewdness and greed," the packer Georges said philosophically, "greed always wins."

Then they began to discuss the Chatelain. He had as much money as a dog has fleas, they said; he did not need to worry about a few lorryloads of wine. But over in England and America they paid more for his wines than the Boches did, and therefore, conceited as he was, he came down from his castle and whined to a common Monsieur Planchard for his lorries. "I bet a bottle of Pernod and ten packets of Gaulois," declared Maurice, "when the Boches come the marquis will be hand in glove with them."

Old man Jeannot, the messenger, had held his job for many years and had learned tolerance from his boss, the deputy prefect. He said that it was going a little too far

to believe the Marquis capable of such treason ; of course it could not be denied that the Chatelain was perhaps a little fascistic. "A little fascistic," mocked Maurice. "The girl is a little pregnant." And : "How about it, Jeannot," he urged. "Will you take up my bet ?"

"I am not a gambler," the official refused with dignity.

The old driver Richard turned to Maurice. "I am surprised," he said, "that you are still here. If I looked as hundred per cent class A as you do, I certainly would not wait for the Germans." Simone could hardly await Maurice's answer.

He yawned ; it sounded a little artificial. "Oh hell," he said, "the Boches will have more to do than to look at the clothes of all men, between nineteen and fifty-five. And here in Saint-Martin I can easily prove that I am a civilian."

"The Boches don't fool about," persisted the old man. "If they once get you they send you straight to Boche-land."

"All rumours," Maurice rejoined scornfully, "all nonsense."

It seemed to Simone that Maurice knew quite well that these rumours were not nonsense and that it was a serious risk to stay here. Why then did he stay ? Probably because he was enormously proud and conceited. He could not bear the suspicion of cowardice, not even the shadow of a suspicion. But it was decent of him to conceal his courage and his pride behind rude and embarrassed excuses.

From the office, Uncle Prosper and another gentleman came walking across the court in the bright sunlight. The gentleman was rather small but he carried himself very erect ; his skin was sallow, his hair very black, and he had hard, agile, brown eyes over his slightly hooked nose. He was wearing riding clothes and as he came across the yard he was hitting his riding crop lightly against his boots. Simone had never seen the Marquis de Saint-Brisson from near at hand ; she looked at him critically and spitefully. The nearer he came the more her hatred grew. "A little fascistic." She was sorry that Uncle Prosper was engaged in business with this man.

With idle, suspicious curiosity the men on the bench saw the two gentlemen approach. When they had come very near, the messenger Jeannot stood up; the old driver Richard also rose slowly; Maurice and the packer Georges remained seated. The two gentlemen stood in front of the bench. There was only a little shade. Uncle Prosper stepped into the shade; the Marquis stood so that part of his face was shaded and he continued to hit his boots with the crop.

The employers were silent and seemed to be waiting. Presently Uncle Prosper cleared his throat and said: "My friends, I have a contract with the Marquis. I have assumed the obligation of taking a shipment to Bayonne. It is a matter of certain property which is not to fall into the hands of the Boches. This shipment is of great importance to the Marquis and the Planchard Company would like to carry out its contract. Whether that can be done depends upon you."

The men were silent.

Simone could not believe her ears. Uncle Prosper had spoken with a friendly persuasion as the fatherly head of the firm, in a casual tone as if the whole thing were quite natural. Simone could not believe that he seriously wanted to have the wine transported and not the refugees. It was only his weakness in front of this distinguished gentleman, the Chatelain, that prompted him to speak this way; he was not serious; he expected his men to say that it was impossible.

The messenger Jeannot, an upright man, said: "I had a letter for you, from Monsieur le Sous-Préfet, Monsieur Planchard. Didn't Monsieur Peyroux give you the letter? Monsieur le Sous-Préfet is waiting for an answer."

No one said a word. Then, without looking at the people, the Chatelain said: "I will pay a high premium if the shipment arrives safely in Bayonne. I will pay ten thousand francs." And Uncle Prosper added: "You must understand that Monsieur le Marquis's sole concern is to save French property from the Boches." But the Marquis with his

rasping voice said : "Don't talk so much, Planchard. My motives concern only myself."

Simone at the pump swallowed hard and wiped the perspiration from her brow. Uncle Prosper should not have gone so far. He should not have taken the part of this man so emphatically.

Maurice, with his high voice, said slowly, and pointedly : "I believe it will be hardly possible to get the shipment through. What will the likes of us do if the Boches catch us ? On the road it is hard to prove that one is a civilian. Here I can do that. Here you can testify for me, Monsieur Planchard." He spoke thoughtfully, as though seriously weighing all these arguments, but he looked boldly into Uncle Prosper's eyes.

The Marquis, still looking into space and switching his riding crop, said : "Yes, it will take some courage." He spoke softly. It sounded unspeakably arrogant.

Maurice, just as softly and coolly, said : "Yes, it takes courage. These refugees, now, are strange people. They only think of themselves. They think the cars should only be used to transport them and they have no respect for French property. It could very well happen that they would simply throw the barrels out of the lorries and get in themselves."

Everybody was quiet.

Only the soft cracking of the riding crop against the boot was audible. Simone stood at her pump, filled with wild emotions. "You mustn't let Maurice speak all alone," her inner voice told her. "You mustn't behave as if you belonged to the other side. You must say something. You must prove it."

She swallowed, and all at once she said, not loudly but valiantly into the sultry heat and into the unpleasant silence : "What else can the refugees do ?"

They all looked over to the pump. There stood Simone, slender, fairly tall, in her dark green slacks. Her tanned, bony face was red and perspiring ; she pressed her long

pressed lips together, she gazed into space meditatively and a little stubbornly.

"Eh?" Maurice's voice from the bench sounded clear and astonished.

The Marquis turned away suddenly and sharply: "Come on, Planchard," he said. "You haven't trained your men well." With bewilderment and rage, Uncle Prosper looked from Simone to the others and back again at Simone. He wanted to explode, but he thought better of it, turned round sideways and followed the Chatelain. As they walked towards the house the latter added: "Whatever happens in this country, discipline will be restored again. There are some people who will discover that."

After the two gentlemen had disappeared into the office building, old Richard the driver cleared his throat with much ado, spat, and said to Maurice: "Now it's high time that you disappeared. The Chatelain is not to be trifled with."

Maurice grinned all over and answered: "Well, wasn't I right, old fellow? The refugees would knock my head off if I transported his wine. Even the half-baked brat over there in her dark green slacks grasped that. So the stuck-up, dirty swine of a fascist must understand it too."

"I still think you ought to get out of here in a hurry," the old fellow repeated stubbornly.

But Simone was proud. In spite of his disdainful words, Maurice knew very well that it had taken courage to speak as she had done.

III

NUTMEG IN THE CREAM SAUCE

In the evening the dining-room was brilliantly lighted, the table, as always, ceremoniously set. It was of great importance to Uncle Prosper to dine now with the usual formality;

his nerves were so taxed, he wanted his home life at 1 run as smoothly and peacefully as ever.

Simone's eyes followed her uncle as he peeled radish his sardines, spread paté on a roll. She waited finally to make some remark about her brazen behavior. But he behaved as if nothing had happened. He even mention the visit of the Marquis, or the pressing demands by the authorities. Instead, he talked in detail about minor happenings and wasted many words on those who had fled and those who had stayed.

Simone did not take her eyes off him as he ate, and when he had finished, she might quickly serve the next. But her thoughts remained on the events of the afternoon. It had been foolish of her to speak so freely at the time. What did she hope to gain by giving her opinion in front of Uncle and the Chatelain? Madame was right: she was arrogant, unruly, impertinent.

But at least Maurice had seen now where she stood. She knew now that she did not belong to the others and that she did not only "go soliciting." She had accomplished something after all.

It had been painful to listen to Uncle Prosper echo her opinion of the Chatelain. It had been painful to see her had turned round and obediently trotted after him in the house. She had not thought him capable of so much servience.

He was her father's brother. He was the half-brother of her father. He had the reddish hair, the full, shapely nose her father had also had. And his voice, they all said, was very much like her father's voice. But Pierre Planchard had urged the country to establish justice for all and he had urged his men to transport the wine from the Chatelain.

She ought not to listen to the talk of the garage. She ought to try to justify Uncle Prosper. He was right. He had done many good deeds; he had also done many kind things for her. If he did not weigh all his acts of commiss

mission to the smallest detail now, one had to remember that he was involved in a hard battle. The whole great establishment that he had created was suddenly in the greatest danger. And he shielded it and did not take to his heels like Messieurs Amiot and Laroche.

However these friendly feelings did not last long. The memory of her uncle walking across the yard with the matelain drove them away.

She was waiting for him to tell Madame of her unruly conduct, and it tormented her that he did not do it. Was he making an effort to understand her? Did he realize that, her father's daughter, she could not have acted otherwise? Nothing in her attitude indicated her rebellious thoughts. She served Madame, she served Uncle Prosper, and ate a little herself. Then she carried out the dishes and prepared the next course; it was a roast loin of veal with mixed vegetables.

While she served it, Uncle was speaking again of the many people who had fled from Saint-Martin. Yesterday, he declared, he had thoroughly disapproved of such behaviour. To-day, he would have to admit that those who fled now had certain reasonable arguments in their favour. There was reliable information that Highways 7 and 77 were less crowded now. If, for instance, he himself tried now to salvage some of his lorries by taking them to the south, there would be a chance of success. Moreover, it was generally reported that the Boches were arresting hostages in the occupied towns in order to give weight to their demands. If that were done here, then he, as the most prominent man in the community and as a well-known patriot, was in serious danger.

Simone had stopped eating and looked at him intently. He sat there with his expressive, manly face; he spoke with a full, ringing voice—and he wanted to take to his heels. He wanted to evade the problem of the refugees; he wanted to dodge the demands of the Deputy Prefecture; he wanted